

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

AND WHY THEIR WORST LIES ARE TO THEMSELVES

BY CARL M. CANNON

SPECIAL REPORT

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN ROBERTS

INSIDE NEW ORLEANS'S SCHOOL REVOLUTION

P. J. O'ROURKE ON WHERE BIG IDEAS WILL COME FROM

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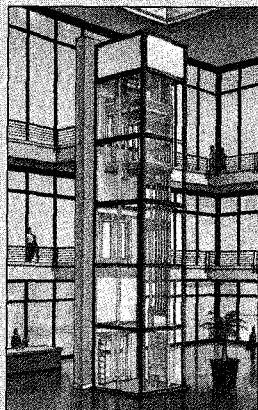
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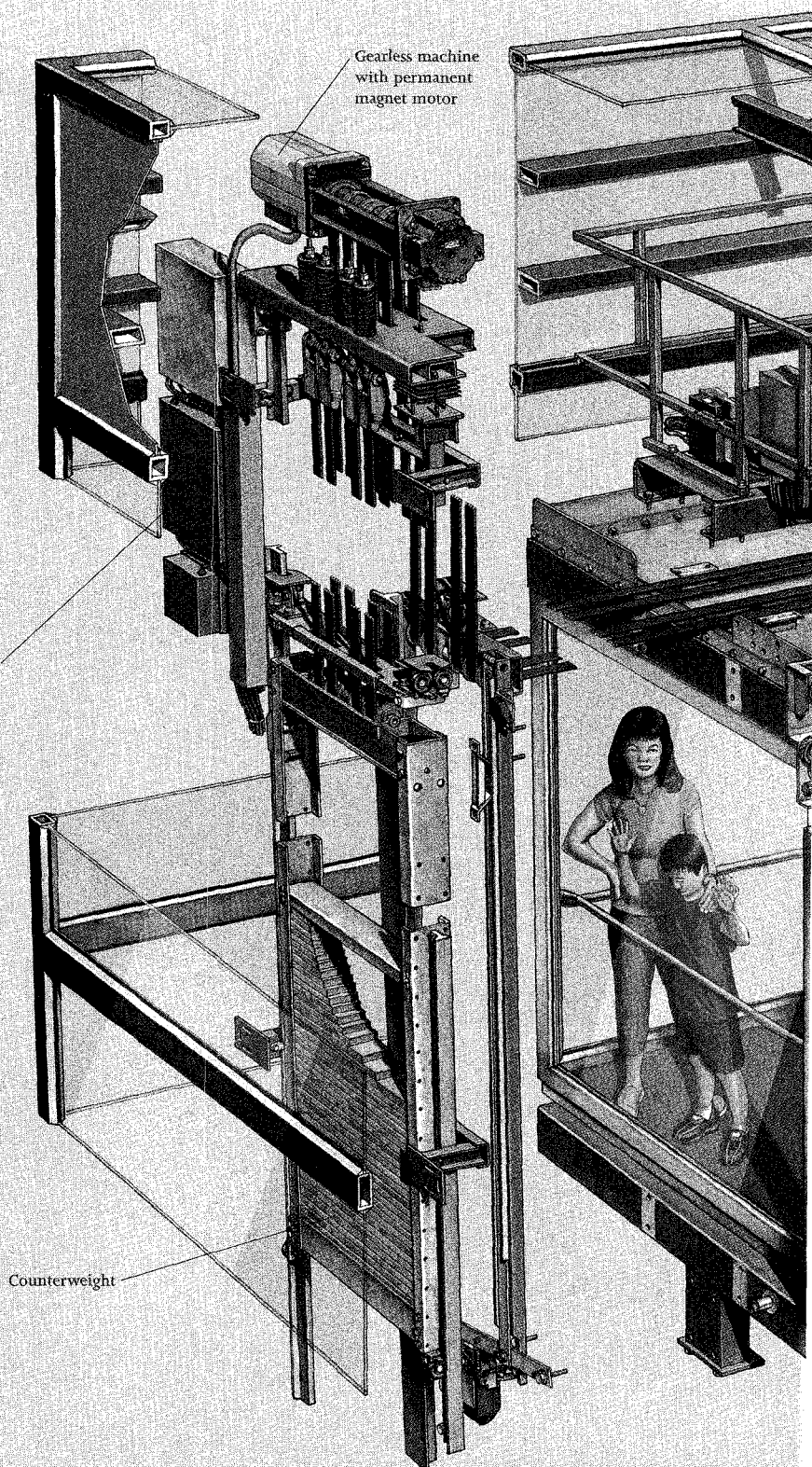
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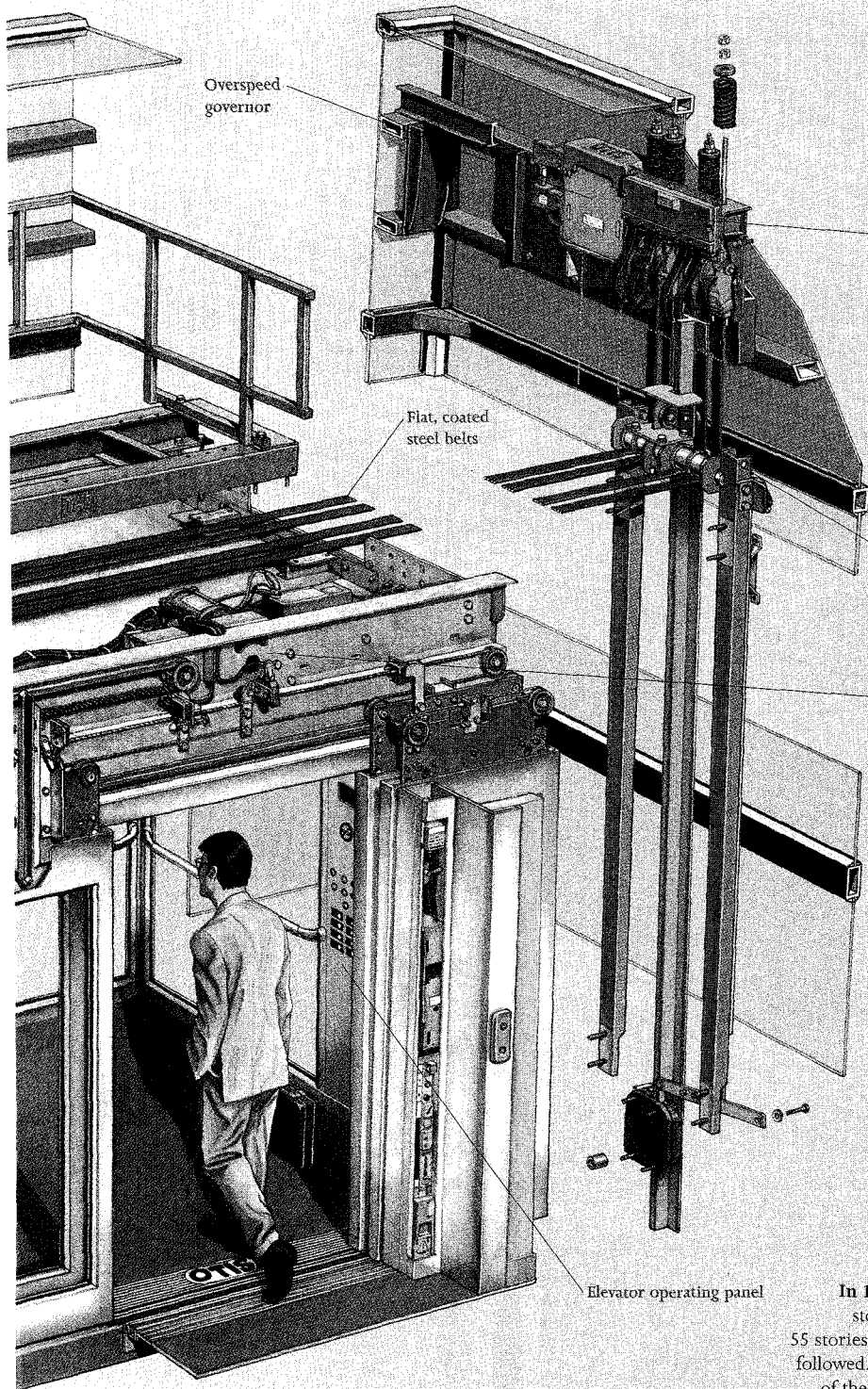
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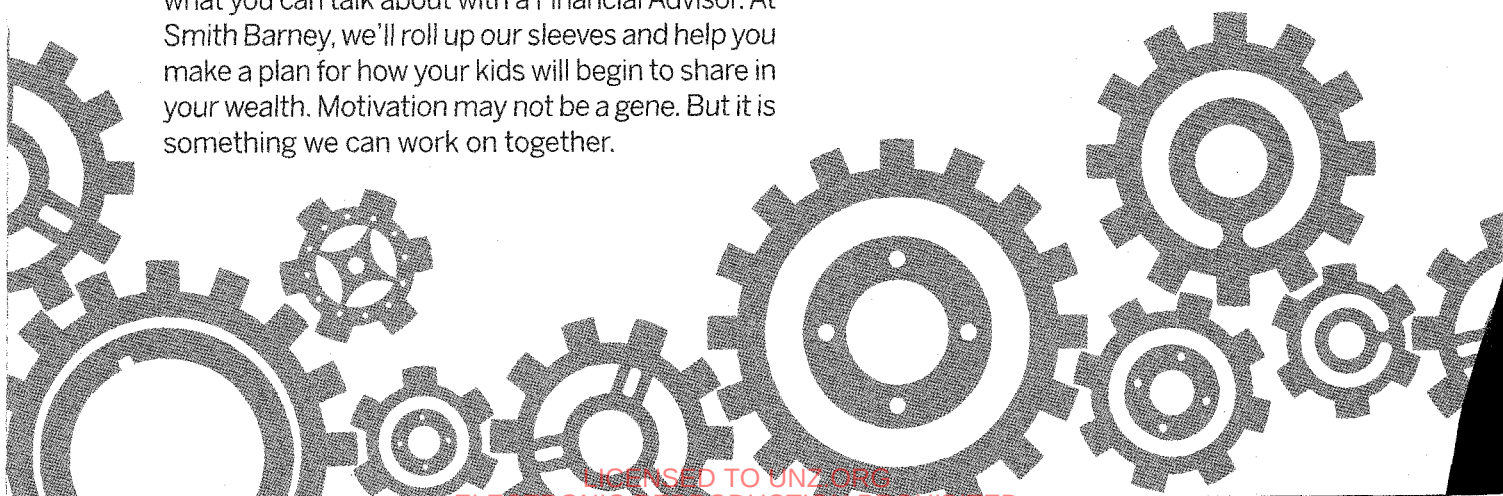
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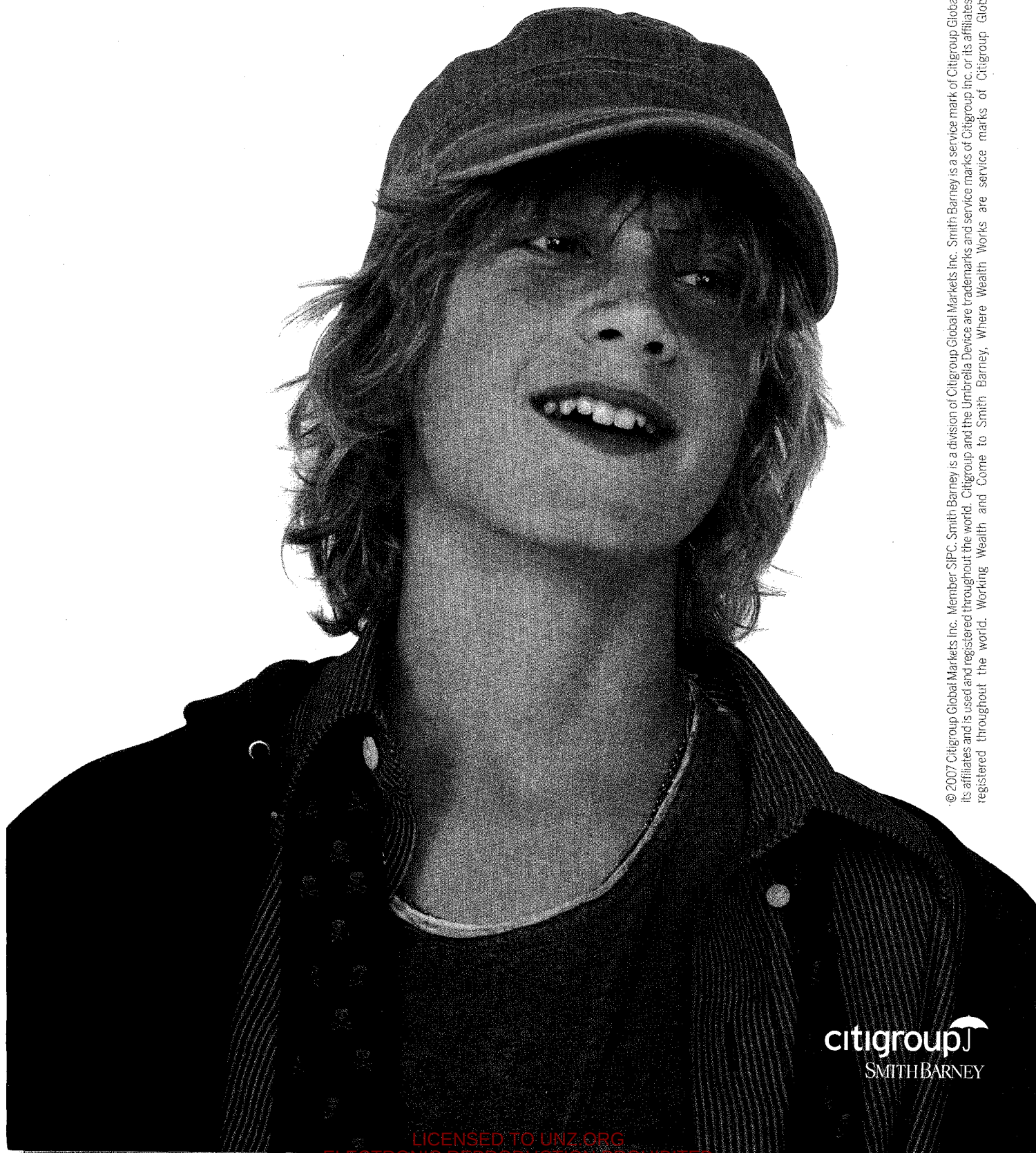
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THE Atlantic

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STATE OF THE UNION

BACK TO SCHOOL

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PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID DEAL

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THE (ANNOTATED) STATE OF THE UNION

Atlantic national correspondent James Fallows, a former presidential speechwriter, offers his take on President Bush's State of the Union address.

INTERVIEW: PRESIDENTIAL LIES

Carl M. Cannon, the author of "Untruth and Consequences," talks about the lies our presidents tell us—and the ones they tell themselves.

SLIDESHOW: IMAGES FROM ALSACE-LORRAINE

Take a picturesque—and sometimes bizarre—photographic journey through the French countryside in search of America's past.



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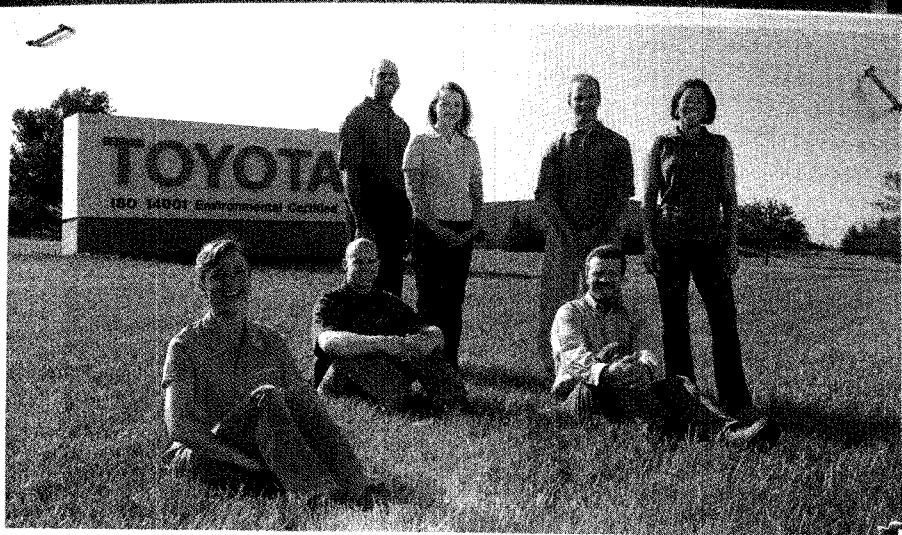
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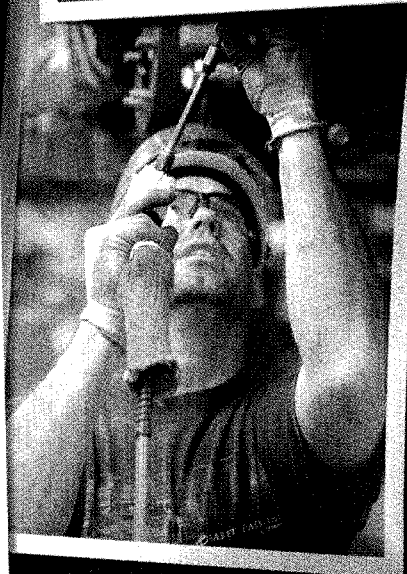
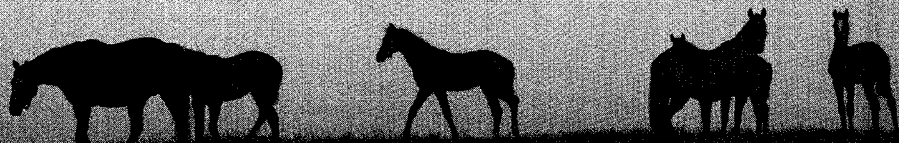


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SOME WORDS ABOUT THE DESIGN

The design of *The Atlantic* has always been so self-effacing, so quietly subordinate to the magazine's stories, essays, and poems, that it seems somehow out of keeping to draw your attention to the redesign in your hands. But it deserves an introduction. This new design, the result of more than a year's preparation, grew out of concerns expressed by our readers and staff that the layout seemed a little too humble. We wanted each section, and the magazine as a whole, to convey the same clarity, coherence, and force as its best writing. With that as his mandate, our art director, Jason Treat, set out to give the reader both more reason to pause and more encouragement to press ahead—to make *The Atlantic* both more visually arresting and easier to page through. His overarching goal, he said, was for “the aesthetics of the magazine to match the power of its content—to be ambitious, thought-provoking, and original.”

The logo and the basic geometry of the cover remain the same. It is inside the magazine that you will notice changes, some of them subtle, others more striking. Among the latter, the most obvious is the introduction of illustrated tables of contents—yes, that's *tables*, plural. In the interest of simplicity—saving readers from having to flip through several pages to figure out what is where, and where is what—we have returned to what was once our standard practice: a single page enumerating all the contents. We are calling this “The Issue in Brief,” and it appears in this issue on page 10.

In something of a departure from tradition, we have added a new, two-page photographic spread at the front of the magazine, partly to give exceptional photography more prominence. This spread is also meant to call attention to the stories we believe most distinguish *The Atlantic*: the long-form narrative features and essays that make up what we call “the well.” Our cover usually focuses on just one of

these stories, shining a spotlight that, at least by contrast and implication, has tended to leave the others in shadow. This new spread will allow us to give dramatic display to another feature, in this issue to Amy Waldman's chronicle of the reinvention of New Orleans's schools.

Behind the well, you will find another photo spread, this one presenting a fuller version of the contents of the magazine's third section, “The Critics.” Beginning with this issue, we have combined our book reviews with the pieces in what we had called “Pursuits & Retreats,” uniting our strongest critical voices in one section devoted to books, culture, technology, and travel. In each issue, the picture for this introductory spread will be drawn from one of the pieces in the section; this time, it is an illustration for Toby Lester's essay about the villages of Alsace-Lorraine.

Careful readers will notice other changes. Mark Steyn's obituary column has returned from the back of the magazine to its original home in “The Agenda,” which now also houses the “Calendar” feature. Feature stories now open in a large type size, on spreads that more fully integrate art with text. The folio information—page number, story title, and so forth—has risen from the bottom of each page to the top corner, to make the magazine easier to navigate. In the same spirit, a summary now appears near the top of each story's opening page, above rather than below the headline. For all headlines, Treat has brought out of retirement the typeface Bauer Bodoni, which *The Atlantic* used in the past. For the body of stories, he has switched to Miller Text, an easily read and elegant font.

Readers will also note, we hope, what hasn't changed: that the design remains in the service of the writing, and the writing in the service of ideas, wit, and truth, as best we can determine it. —THE EDITORS



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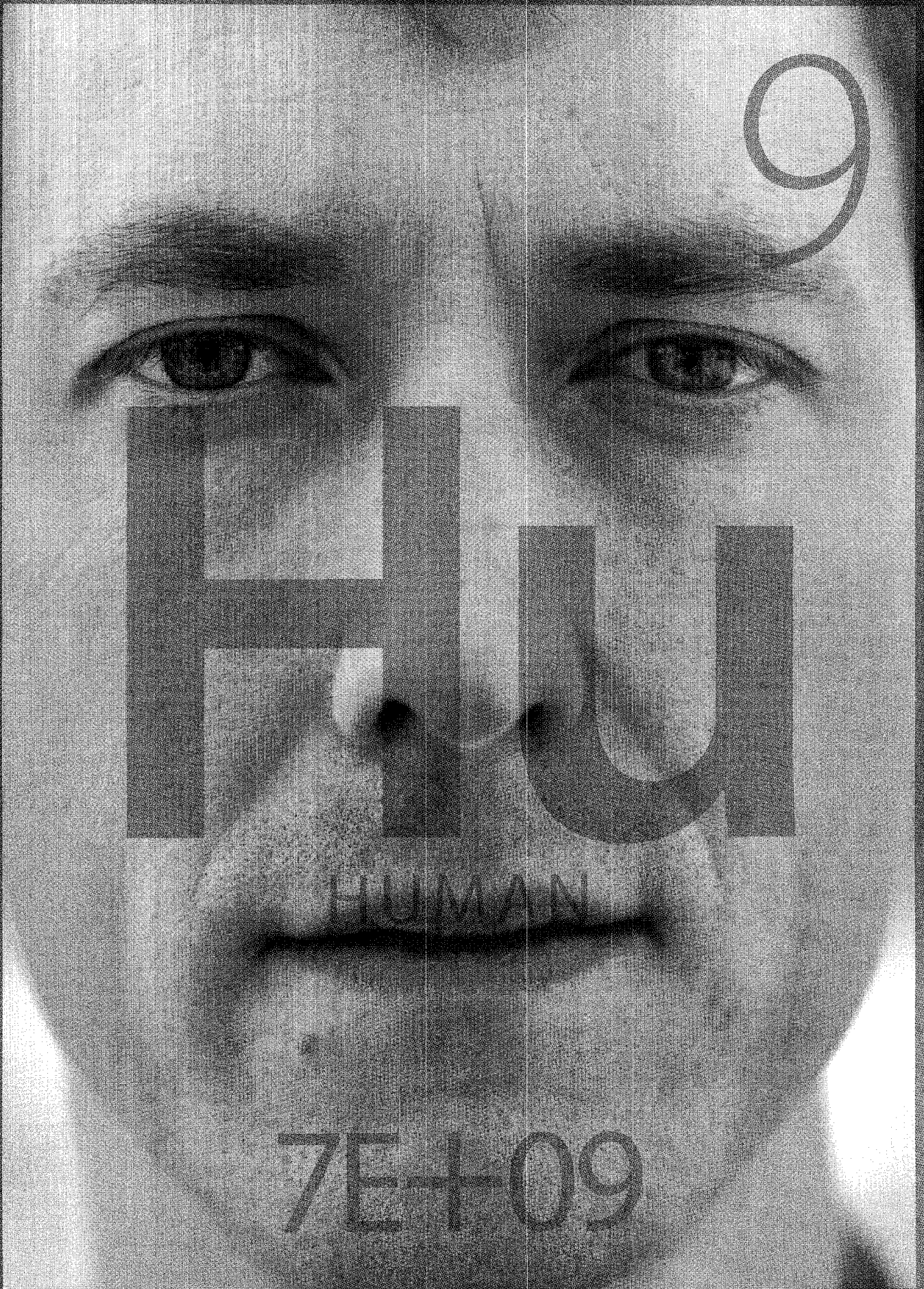
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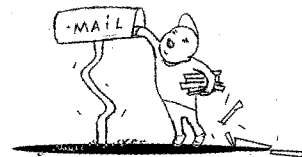
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007 THE ATLANTIC

INFLUENCE IN AMERICA

To be interesting, lists should provoke. Your "100 Most Influential Americans" selection succeeded ("They Made America," December *Atlantic*). As the author of *They Made America*, the book and PBS series and radio documentary, I was flattered to have my title as your headline, but disappointed that your panel of historians did scant justice to so many of the men and women who really did make America: those who created the modern world with their innovations, from the steam engine to the search engine.

Without the innovators, America could not have been knit together as a nation, nor preserved as such. Think of the railroads and the telegraph lines that were crucial to the North's victory in 1865; think of World War II and the Cold War, and America's emergence as the world's predominant economic power.

But the most fundamental point your panel missed is how much innovators have enabled America's dedication to democracy and equal rights. A. P. Giannini opened banking to the common man. Madam C. J. Walker, the orphan daughter of slaves, built the largest black business of its day, liberating millions of African American women through the iconic status she achieved. Gary Kildall and Ken Olson expanded access to the computer beyond a select priesthood. The panel did mention Henry Ford, but failed to stress his singular achievement: giving practical reality to the rhetoric of democracy by fighting for the people's car. Similarly, Cyrus McCormick's truly original contribution—as important as his reaper—was his invention of easy credit for the masses of ordinary farmers who otherwise could not have afforded his machine.

Beyond this, it was amazing to see no mention of the new nation's first

notable innovator, Oliver Evans (the high-pressure steam engine), or Charles Goodyear (vulcanized rubber), Philo T. Farnsworth (television), Herbert Boyer (the father of biotechnology), Theodore Judah (the architect of the transcontinental railroad) ... I could go on!

Rather than depreciating the achievements of our innovators in business and technology, historians should acknowledge how much we need them for making a better America—independent of foreign fossil fuel, ready to cope with the effects of global warming and with competition from low-cost economies. Just as they made yesterday's America, the innovators are crucial to making tomorrow's.

Harold Evans
New York, N.Y.

HILLARY'S TURN

Joshua Green spent pages detailing Hillary Clinton's remarkable professionalism, political agility, work ethic, and ability to grow on the job ("Take Two," November *Atlantic*), so what more does he want of her? He criticizes her lack of "big ideas" and "crusading causes," but can he name a single big idea or cause that Governor George W. Bush was known for when he sought the presidency in 2000? Green wonders at Clinton's lack of firebrand tactics, but did he pay attention to his own description of the Senate as a place where female senators have had to "walk down two floors to use a public restroom" and still have to submit their wardrobes to the daily approval of "bench ladies"? Besides, Clinton's entire career has been about risk—from making partner in a southern law firm in the 1970s, to redefining the role of the first lady as aggressively as Dick Cheney has redefined the vice presidency, to becoming a senator who has put her most powerful foes in a remarkable state of debt and deference to her.

I have yet to see any analysis by a male journalist that shows any real understanding of the burden that Clinton, and all talented professional women, still labor under. It's the "Ginger Rogers Rule": Do everything Fred Astaire did, but backwards and in high heels. And yet it's still never enough. Our toughness will be "caution," and our political skills will be called "compromise"; we'll hear that although we've "reached the top," it's not a "viable" place to be. And God help you if you answer questions about complex issues, because then you're a "laundry lady, pinning up every fact."

As a constituent of Senator Clinton's, I long ago made peace with the fact that I don't always agree with her, and I now see her as excellent presidential material. Mainly that's because she shares most of my values and works hard to earn my vote. But it's also because, as a professional woman, I know exactly what she's going through.

Joan Hilty
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Hillary Clinton comes across as a cure for some of the worst ills of contemporary Congress: she is modest while her colleagues grandstand; she accepts small gains in minor bills developed through compromise rather than sponsoring high-profile bills headed to certain failure; and perhaps most important, she makes common cause with members across the aisle, preserving a small corner of collegiality and conversation in a body that has become increasingly acrimonious and partisan. I can see how Senator Clinton may be on her way to a position of Senate leadership.

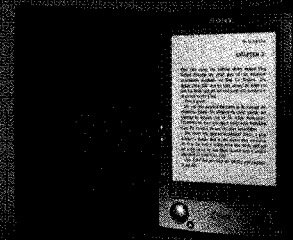
On the other hand, what I did not see in Joshua Green's profile was a future president of the United States. Our nation is in crisis: global climate change will soon make us sentimental for a time

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when we feared terrorists; the rising price of energy will make us all poorer; and the yawning chasm between the very rich and everybody else is making us a plutocratic caricature of democracy. Green did not depict a Hillary Clinton with sufficient vision and courage to lead us back from the brink. Intelligence, knowledge, political astuteness, perhaps even wisdom—these she appears to possess, in marked contrast to the current president. But I fear those qualities are insufficient to lead the nation as it soon will desperately need to be led.

David Graber

Three Rivers, Calif.

Joshua Green replies:

I'm happy to address Joan Hilty's criticisms of my Hillary Clinton profile, but let's dispense with the straw-man comparison to George W. Bush. Surely we can agree that it would be deeply unfair to doom Senator Clinton to the soft bigotry of low expectations. (And if we can't: Bush ran on the big idea of "compassionate conservatism," which served him well—at least until he assumed office.) I agree that Clinton has faced extraordinary challenges as a woman in the Senate; indeed, I documented them more thoroughly than anyone else I've seen. I also agree that she has taken large risks in her career, such as running for the Senate. My point was that she has taken none as a senator, which has led to a record notable for its caution and risk-aversion—qualities that Americans typically do not seek in their presidents, and ones that I believe will hurt her presidential campaign for the reasons delineated in David Graber's letter. It isn't Clinton's gender but her lack of vision that I think most imperils her bid for the White House.

RULE BRITANNIA?

Benjamin Schwarz marvelously highlights the merits of the latest volume in the New Oxford History of England series, *A Mad, Bad, & Dangerous People?* ("The Path of Least Resistance," October *Atlantic*). Yet I must take issue with his invidious comparison of the

New Oxford History of England series with the Oxford History of the United States. The rate of publication of titles in the History of the United States series, which Schwarz calls "unconscionably tardy," reflects the high standards set by the Oxford Press and the series editors: Richard Hofstadter, C. Vann Woodward, and now David Kennedy. It also reflects a conceptual change in the series, which was originally intended to be a set of chronological political histories, accompanied by thematic volumes on culture, economics, diplomacy, and other topics. Titles now are expected to blend social, political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, and military history into coherent and vividly written narratives with strong interpretive angles—a high bar, especially given the richness of American historiography since the series was inaugurated.

Book reviews are invariably a matter of personal opinion. But the committees of the Pulitzer Prize, the Bancroft Prize, and the Parkman Prize, as well as a great many readers, might disagree with Schwarz's characterization of Kennedy's *Freedom From Fear* and James Patterson's *Grand Expectations*, among other titles, as "bloated and intellectually flabby."

Susan Ferber

Executive Editor

Oxford University Press

New York, N.Y.

Benjamin Schwarz replies:

I stand by my invidious comparison. The Oxford History of England series aims to meet the same standards as its American counterpart, and its authors also "blend social, political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, and military history." Somehow, though, the British writers have managed to produce far more volumes of a generally far higher intellectual and stylistic quality in a fraction of the time. And I stand by my verdict of intellectually mushy storytelling regarding the two titles Susan Ferber mentions (and I'd use the same words to describe Restless Giant, James Patterson's other volume in the series).



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follow-up, THE ATLANTIC 100

In our last issue, we published a special feature, "The 100 Most Influential Americans of All Time"; the list is the collective product of rankings generated by ten eminent historians. (To see the Top 100, and to read the accompanying essay, go to www.theatlantic.com/doc/200612/influentials.)

Before we unveiled the list, we conducted an online contest, asking readers to predict which Americans would grace our Top Ten. We received hundreds of entries, but no one correctly guessed all ten, or even nine out of ten. Eight contestants, however, successfully named eight of the ten figures.

Congratulations, therefore, go to Mark Guszak of Lampasas, Texas; Peter High of Chevy Chase, Md.; Dax McMennamin of Tucson, Ariz.; Mike Monje of Portland, Ore.; Joshua Rosenthal of

Providence, R.I.; David Trilling of Los Angeles, Calif.; Terry D. Wright of Piqua, Ohio; and Gerald Zubkoff of Rydal, Pa.

We awarded first prize to Zubkoff, because his two incorrect guesses were not far out of the historians' Top Ten—he picked John D. Rockefeller (our historians' No. 11) and Mark Twain (16), while omitting only Alexander Hamilton (5) and Woodrow Wilson (10).

Tallying our contestants' aggregate guesses yielded the following *Atlantic* Readers' Top Ten List, which is strikingly similar to our historians'—the only two of the historians' choices that didn't make our readers' list were John Marshall and Woodrow Wilson (Nos. 7 and 10 respectively on our historians' list, and Nos. 17 and 22 on our readers' list), and there were only a handful of significant disagreements, most notably about Bill Gates, whom our readers ranked forty-five slots higher than our historians did; and John F. Kennedy, who was ranked

No. 12 by our readers but didn't crack the historians' Top 100.

1. Abraham Lincoln
(No. 1, according to our historians)
2. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (4)
3. Thomas Jefferson (3)
4. Martin Luther King Jr. (8)
5. George Washington (2)
6. Henry Ford (14)
7. Thomas Edison (9)
8. Benjamin Franklin (6)
9. Bill Gates (54)
10. Alexander Hamilton (10)

We also asked readers to tell us who should have made the Top 100 but didn't. In the ten days after November 21, when we officially posted the list, more than 1,500 readers wrote in to nominate their choices for Most Egregious Omissions, and in some cases to quarrel with what they viewed as the Most Nonsensical Inclusions. Readers proposed more than 600 additional figures as worthy of inclusion in the Top 100, from Adams (Abigail, Ansel, Samuel) and Ailey (Alvin) to

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Kilchurn Castle on the aptly named Loch Awe.

Zappa (Frank) and Zinn (Howard). Once again, our readers clearly believe JFK's influence to have been stronger than our historians do; he got more than twice as many votes for inclusion as the second-place finisher, Billy Graham. The twenty-five most-cited names are enumerated below, along with selected commentary.

1. John F. Kennedy
2. Billy Graham
3. Rosa Parks
4. Bill Wilson and Bob Smith
(cofounders of *Alcoholics Anonymous*)
5. Muhammad Ali
6. Robert Kennedy
7. George Washington Carver
8. Oprah Winfrey
9. Bob Dylan
10. George W. Bush
11. Bill Clinton
12. Milton Friedman
13. Douglas MacArthur
14. John Wayne
15. Malcolm X
16. Clara Barton
17. Michael Jordan

18. Harriet Tubman
19. Neil Armstrong
20. César Chávez
21. Steve Jobs
22. Ray Kroc
23. John Muir
24. George Patton
25. Steven Spielberg

SELECTED COMMENTS

Nominating Irving Berlin: "No Jew since Jesus has done more for the Christmas holiday."

Nominating Billy Graham: "Influenced every president since [Harry] Truman. The idea that Mary Baker Eddy had more influence than Billy Graham is ludicrous."

Nominating Philo T. Farnsworth: "Invented the television—if Bill Gates and Alexander Bell make the list, so does Philo."

"Albert Einstein should be above Edison. Sure, lightbulbs are great, but for America, nuclear weapons are more important—they ended World War II

and produced the Cold War."

"You put *both* Brigham Young and Joseph Smith in the Top 100? As a former Mormon, even I can't see that they were more important than many of the missing names."

"American Indians are Americans, as are African Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans. And there are some figures in those categories who are more influential than some of your other nominees. After all, where would James Fenimore Cooper be without his epic tales of Native Americans? Think outside the white-male box."

"The idea that Elvis Presley was more influential than Joseph McCarthy or J. Edgar Hoover is preposterous. After Hoover died, Congress had to introduce legislation to make sure no one else ever became as powerful as he had been."

To read more reader commentary, see all the lamented omissions, and weigh in with your own, visit www.theatlantic.com.

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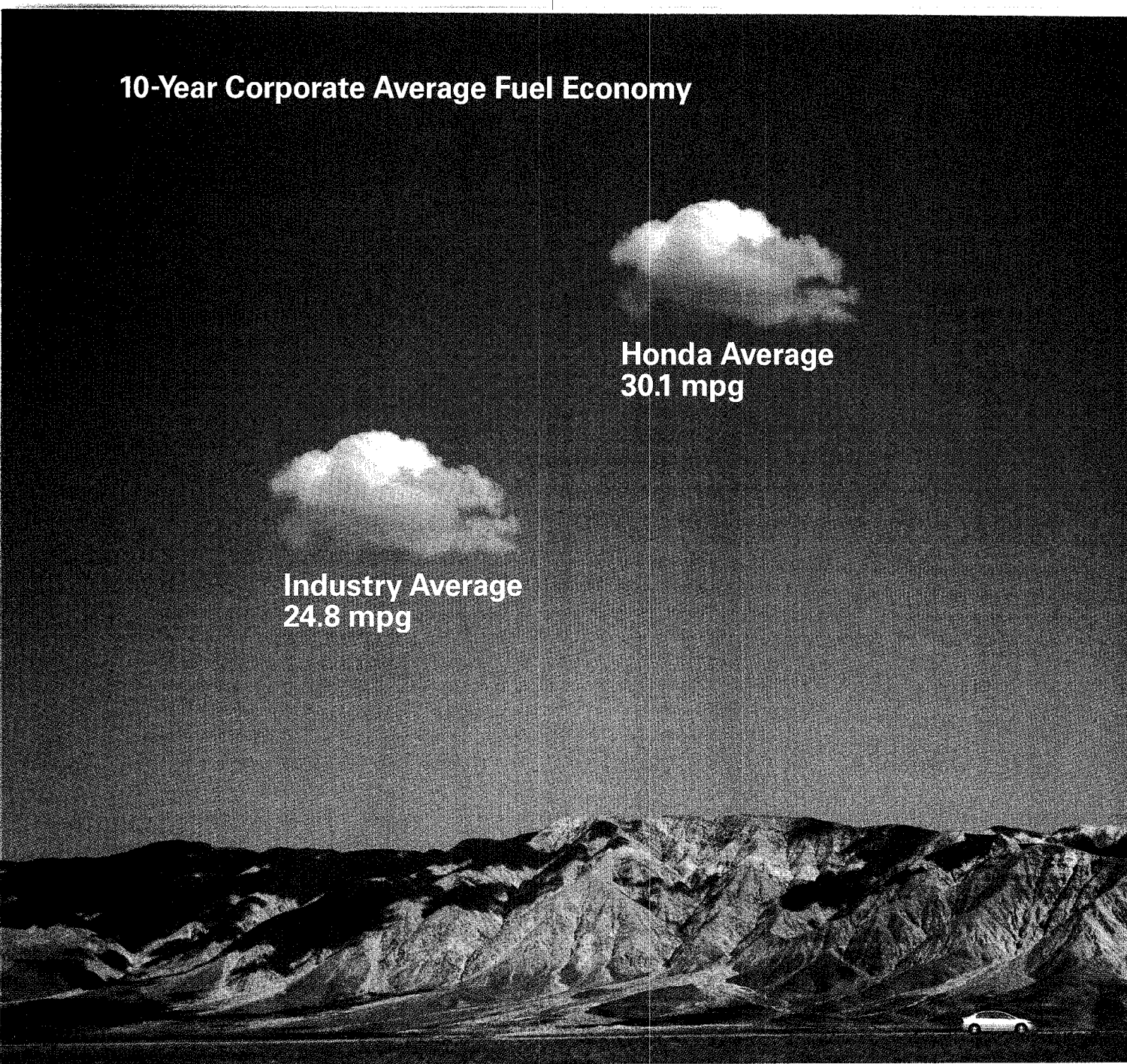
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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007 THE ATLANTIC



A WAREHOUSE BURNS in central Baghdad

COMMENT

The Middle East looks like Europe circa World War I.

A War to Start All Wars

BY NIALL FERGUSON

The United States invaded Iraq in April 2003 for multiple reasons, but the most ambitious was a desire to remake a whole region. The Middle East, it was argued, was full of political and economic underachievers, driven to violence by a Muslim/Arab inferiority complex. Replacing Saddam Hussein with an exemplary democracy would begin a domino effect, spreading American values to Iraq's mostly undemocratic neighbors.

Oh dear. Iraq is now in the midst of a civil war—already one of the world's biggest since 1945, with the kind of escalating tit-for-tat killings and ethnic cleansing that can last for years, even decades. Debate currently centers on how quickly the United States can wind down its involvement in Iraq and on whether neighboring countries can be persuaded to help stabilize it.

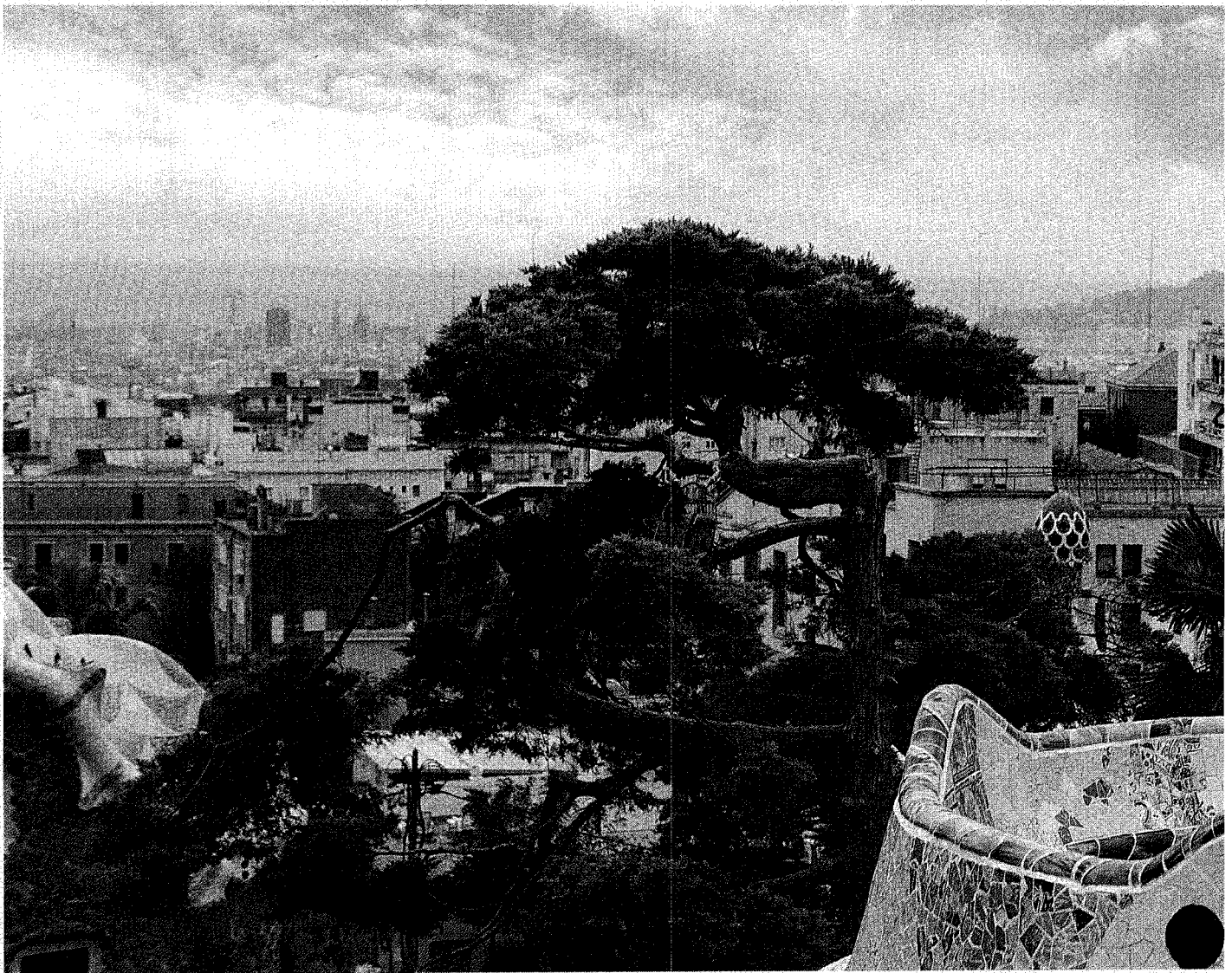
But what if it is Iraq that destabilizes its neighbors? The irony is that America's ill-executed intervention may yet remake the Middle East. But not quite in the way neoconservatives intended.

The critical question today is whether the current civil war could spread beyond Iraq's borders, engulfing its neighbors or sparking a regional war. Realists—not least James Baker, co-chair of the Iraq Study Group—have an interest in arguing that it could. In seeking to enlist the assistance of Iraq's neighbors, specifically Syria and Iran, the United States would be appealing to their self-interest, not their altruism. Fear of contagion is why these long-standing foes of the United States might be willing to help stop the slaughter in Iraq.

Iraq, after all, is not the only Middle Eastern state to have a mixed population

of Sunnis, Shiites, and other religious groups. There are substantial but not overwhelming numbers of Shiites in Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen, to say nothing of Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. Even predominantly Shia Iran has its Sunni minority, among them the persecuted Ahwazi Arabs, who live in the strategically vital southwestern province of Khuzestan.

So how likely is the scenario of a regional civil war, beginning in Iraq but eventually extending right across the greater Middle East? One obvious parallel is with central Africa in the 1990s. In Rwanda in 1994, extremists from the Hutu majority attempted to exterminate the country's Tutsi minority. In response, an army of Tutsi exiles then invaded from Uganda and drove the Hutu killers (and many other Hutus) across the border



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"Living Room." Park Güell, Barcelona.
Image courtesy of the human network.



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into Congo and Tanzania. Soon nearly all of Congo's neighbors had become embroiled in a monstrous orgy of violence. Altogether, it has been estimated that between 1998 and 2000, as many as 3.3 million people lost their lives in central Africa's Great War, the majority from starvation or disease as the entire region plunged into anarchy.

Admittedly, not all civil wars metastasize in this way. At around the same time as the genocide in Rwanda, a war raged among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in various parts of a disintegrating Yugoslavia. But there was never much danger that this war would be spread throughout the Bal-

can Habsburg lands had been characterized by high levels of ethnic heterogeneity. Consequently, the transition from empire to the nation-states of the post-World War I era proved painful in the extreme.

Two minorities were especially ill-placed in the new order of the 1920s: the Germans and the Jews. The former fought back against their minority status in places like Czechoslovakia and Poland and, under the leadership of a messianic Austrian, temporarily created a Greater German Empire. The latter were among that bloodthirsty empire's principal victims. Only with the expulsion of the Germans from Central and Eastern Europe

accompanied by democracy (Israel being the exception). Instead the multiethnic states of the region were ruled by either feudal monarchs or fascist strongmen. And a new empire—which preferred to be known as a superpower—generally helped keep these rulers in place, and the region static, if only to hold another superpower at bay.

Only in our time, then, has the Middle East reached the political stage that Central and Eastern Europe reached after the First World War. Only now are countries like Iraq and Lebanon experimenting with democracy. The lesson of European history is that this experiment is a highly dangerous one, particularly at times of economic volatility and chronic insecurity, and particularly where tribes and peoples are mixed up geographically, both within and across borders. The minorities fear—with good reason—the tyranny of the majorities. People vote their ethnicity, not their pocketbook or ideology. And even before the votes are counted, the shooting begins.

What will the United States do if Iraq's neighbors fail to contain the ethnic conflict that is now consuming Iraq? The simple answer would be to leave the people to kill and displace one another until ethnic homogeneity has been established in the various states. That has effectively been American policy in central Africa. The trouble, of course, is that Iraq matters more than Rwanda, economically and strategically. Does anyone seriously believe that a regional conflagration would leave Israel and Saudi Arabia—America's most important allies in the Middle East—unscathed?

Ask a different question. Did anyone seriously believe that a war in Central and Eastern Europe in 1939 would leave Britain and France unaffected? The really sobering lesson of the twentieth century is that some civil wars can grow into more than just regional wars. If the stakes are high enough, they have the potential to become world wars too. ■

The sobering lesson of the twentieth century is that some civil wars can grow into more than just regional wars.

kans. This was not just because of Western military intervention. It was because Yugoslavia's neighbors—Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Romania—were far less combustible than Yugoslavia. More or less ethnically homogeneous in each case, they never seemed remotely likely to go the way of Bosnia, the worst-affected of the former Yugoslavian republics. The Balkan War of the 1990s was much smaller than the central African wars. The most exhaustive database that has been compiled of all those killed and missing in Bosnia—including members of all ethnic groups—contains fewer than 100,000 names.

Yet this can hardly be regarded as an encouraging story as far as Iraq is concerned. For the ethnic homogeneity of Yugoslavia's neighbors was no accident of history. It was a direct consequence of the prolonged and bloody wars of the first half of the twentieth century, which had already destroyed most of the ethnic diversity of the Central and Eastern European countries.

Sixty years ago, Central and Eastern Europe was entering the final phase of a succession of wars and civil wars that originated with the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Before 1914,

and the creation of truly homogeneous but Soviet-controlled nation-states was peace restored. It is no coincidence that the one country that remained both heterogeneous and independent—Yugoslavia—was, in the 1990s, the scene of Europe's last great ethnic conflict.

The aftermath of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire (also dealt its death blow during World War I) has taken a different, more protracted course. The Turks did not submit to the breakup of empire as readily as the Austrians. Having already murdered the Armenian Christians under the Young Turk regime, they expelled the Orthodox Greeks from Asia Minor and consolidated their Turkish nation-state (albeit retaining a substantial Kurdish minority, whose strivings for autonomy they ruthlessly crushed).

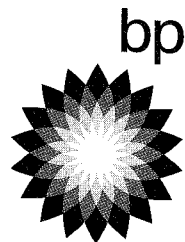
But the rest of what had been the Ottoman Empire did not immediately adopt the model of the nation-state, as Europe had done. Instead, the victors of the First World War established "mandates" (de facto colonies) in the losers' former possessions—Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria. Independence did not come to most of the Middle East until after 1945, and it was seldom

Niall Ferguson is the Laurence A. Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University and a senior fellow of the Hoover Institution. His latest book, *The War of the World: Twentieth-Century Conflict and the Descent of the West*, is published by Penguin Press.

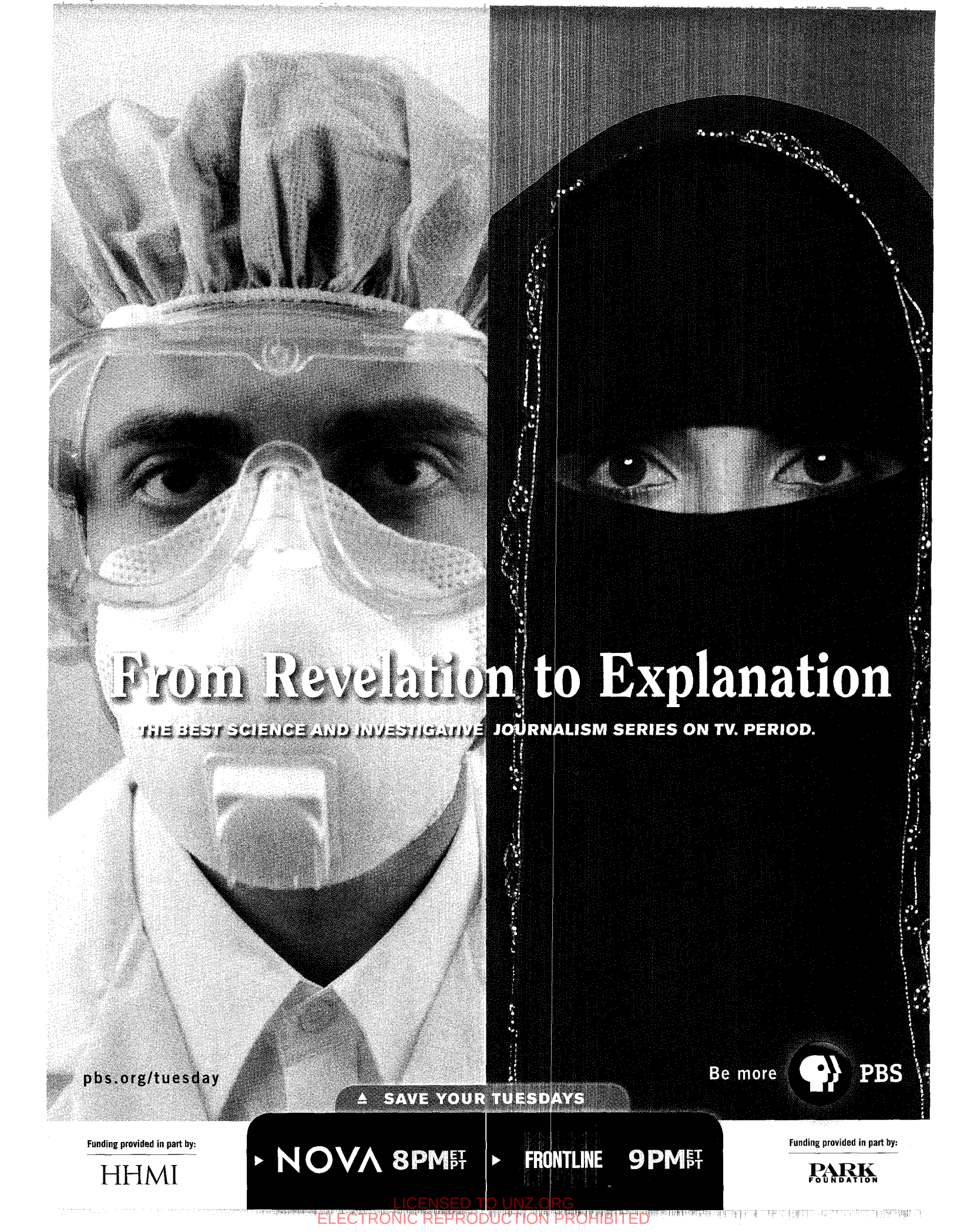
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WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

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JANUARY 10

A Kinder, Gentler Sandinista

The '80s are back in Nicaragua, as Sandinista President Daniel Ortega takes office today. The ex-Marxist revolutionary, who waged a decadelong battle against the U.S.-backed Contras when last in charge, is said to have mellowed, this time promising to fight poverty by working with, rather than against, capitalists.

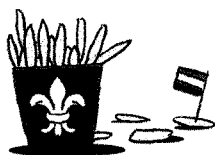


JANUARY 11

Pardon Me?

Barring a last-minute pardon, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the former chief of staff to Vice President Cheney, goes on trial today for lying and obstructing justice during the investigation into the Bush administration leak that exposed Valerie Plame as a CIA operative. Libby's defense—which amounts to a claim that he was too busy

and important to recall details of the affair—took a hit when his mnemonic expert was barred from testifying.



JANUARY 14

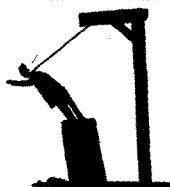
Spiting 'Sarko'

The Union for a Popular Movement, France's ruling rightist party, convenes today to pick a presidential candidate. The unpopular incumbent, Jacques Chirac, has been sparring with his ambitious former protégé and current chief rival, Nicolas Sarkozy (who leads in the polls), for more than a decade, and may pursue a third term.

JANUARY 22

Ashcroft's Bomb

Jose Padilla, the alleged terrorist whom Attorney General John Ashcroft accused in 2002 of plotting to build a dirty bomb, is scheduled to go on trial today in a civilian courtroom.



ALSO IN FEBRUARY

Saddam's Final Hours

Saddam Hussein, convicted in November, may hang for his crimes this month. His appeals should be exhausted by mid-January, according to the chief prosecutor in the case, and the Iraqi government would then have a thirty-day window to execute him.

Crime and (Some) Punishment

The defendants accused of orchestrating the bombings of Madrid commuter trains in March 2004 come to trial this month. Prosecutors are seeking a sentence of more than 38,000 years for each of the seven prime defendants in the attacks, which killed 191 people and injured 1,824. But the maximum time a prisoner can serve in Spain, which has no death penalty, is forty years.

A Royal Pain

After committing such royal no-no's as criticizing Flemish nationalists and the European Union, Belgium's heir apparent, Prince Philippe, faces a constitutional neutering this month that will make the king's royal duties purely ceremonial.

After three years of being held without charge as an enemy combatant, he was indicted last year. The dirty bomb has disappeared from the case, and he is being charged only with supporting terrorism.

FEBRUARY 1-3

Democratic Debs

The Democratic National Committee holds its annual winter meeting in Washington, D.C. The gathering has become the unofficial launch of the "invisible primary" for 2008, with early presidential hopefuls vying for attention.



FEBRUARY 4

Reinforcing Afghanistan

The United States hopes to signal its commitment to keeping order in Afghanistan by sending a four-star general, Dan McNeil, to take command today of U.S. and NATO forces. The United States will then decide whether to add or cut troops.

FEBRUARY 4

Super Bowl Open Mic

The YouTube-inspired media craze for homemade video will reach all the way to the Super Bowl today. During the game, Frito-Lay, Chevrolet, and possibly the NFL will use TV's most expensive airtime to feature the winners of their do-it-yourself ad contests.

FEBRUARY 16

Happy Birthday, Dear Leader

Kim Jong Il, North Korea's squat and famously vain nuclear-powered leader,



"officially" turns sixty-five today (few expect a retirement).

While some suggest that he was born in 1941, state propaganda colorfully claims he was born in 1942, in his father's guerrilla camp atop the sacred Mount Paektu, North Korea's highest peak—and that the heavens marked the occasion with a double rainbow and an especially bright star.

FEBRUARY 17

Blame It on Rio

The writhing bodies at Brazil's annual Carnival celebration provided the perfect cover for a heist last year, when thieves armed with a hand grenade stole paintings by Picasso, Matisse, Monet, and Dalí from the Chácara do Céu before dancing away with their loot. Museums will boost security for this year's celebration, which begins today.

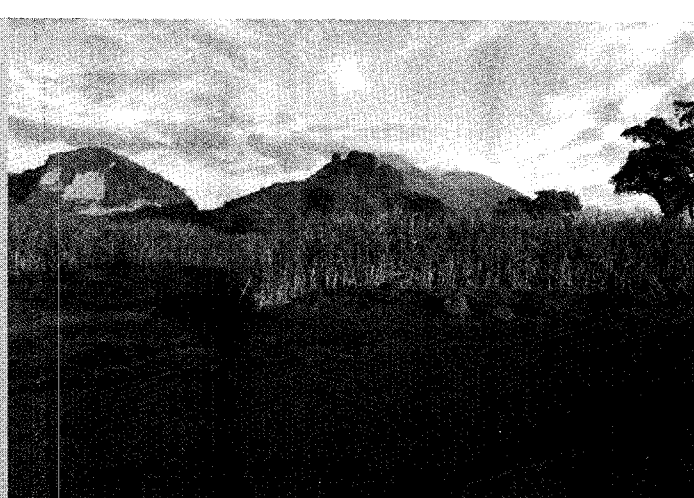
FEBRUARY 15

The Buck Starts Here

Just in time for Presidents' Day, the U.S. Mint today rolls out its new series of \$1 coins, which feature the U.S. presidents in chronological order.

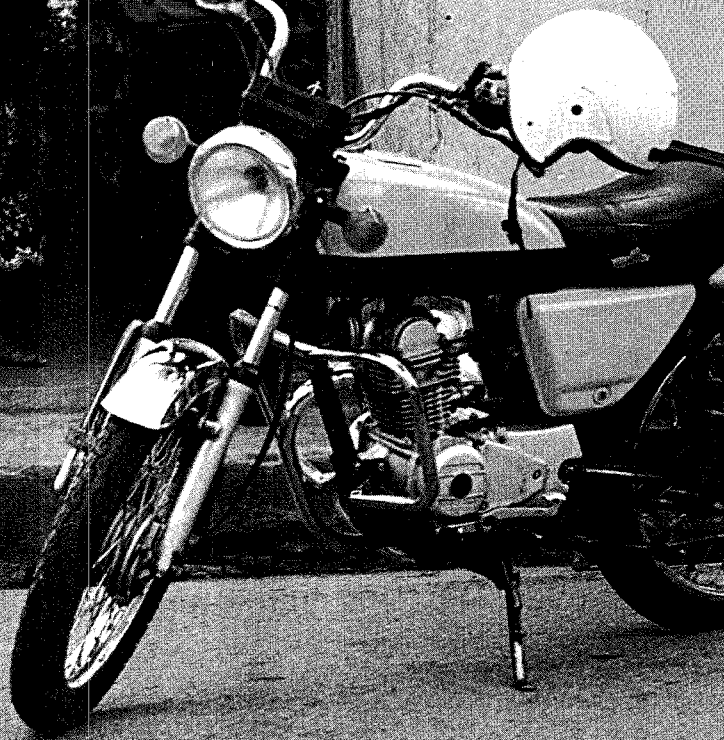
Although the Susan B. Anthony and Sacagawea dollar coins never caught on, the Treasury hopes the latest design, modeled on the successful state quarters, will finally give the greenback a run for its money.





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FIRST PRINCIPLES

The new Democratic Congress just might help the White House mend the country's broken fiscal policy.

The Rancor Dividend

BY CLIVE CROOK

America's fiscal policy today is plainly unsustainable, and, as the economist Herb Stein remarked, what is unsustainable will not be sustained. The question is not *whether* the current spell of chronic overborrowing will come to an end, but *how*.

The worst way would be through an outright financial crisis, forcing emergency spending cuts and tax increases, and (if the timing is unlucky) hitting the economy hard when it is already weak. This is not implausible: it could happen. But oddly enough, the recent midterm election results provide at least some hope for a better ending.

One of the lesser reasons for thinking so is the matriculation of quite a few new fiscally conservative members of Congress, and the rise to prominence of a few established ones. It is encouraging that the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of House Democrats oriented toward fiscal responsibility, is going to need a bigger room to host its weekly meetings: nine new pups bring the group to forty-four members. Some of the old Blue Dogs, such as Tennessee's John Tanner, will be influential in important committees (Tanner is on Ways and Means) and are likely to press hard for fiscal restraint.

That's good as far as it goes, but you would not want to rest too much on the Democratic instinct for prudence with the purse. It's too early to know how most Democrats will approach the issue. It is one thing to deplore fiscal recklessness while campaigning (almost all of them did), quite another to do something about it. The newcomers are of varying stripes: partisans and "moderates" (a roomy category in its own right), economic conservatives and populist progressives. And,

new arrivals aside, the old familiar Democrats will be operating under unfamiliar conditions—power and opposition are different worlds—and under recast leadership. Most of the new House committee chairmen will likely be focused on increasing their own influence, not championing fiscal restraint.

Happily, a larger dynamic may matter more than new people in new roles. William Niskanen of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, has noted that in the past half century there have been only two long periods of rapid fiscal expansion: under the Johnson adminis-

What is especially striking about the current administration's fiscal record is that it nearly matches the Johnson administration not just in expansion of the deficit, which reflects both spending increases and tax cuts, but in spending increases alone. And the recent outlays on Iraq and homeland security are not the only cause of the spending surge. The president's budgets, subsequently enlarged by Congress, have increased non-defense, non-homeland-security discretionary spending almost as quickly—and much faster than the budgets of Bill Clinton or George H. W. Bush.

Divided governments are usually better than the unified kind at keeping spending in line with taxes.

tration, and during the past six years. In both cases, a single party controlled the White House and Congress. At the other extreme, there have been two long periods of fiscal restraint, coinciding with the Eisenhower and Clinton administrations. In both cases, the opposition controlled Congress. Between these extremes, the same lesson generally applies: divided governments usually prove better than the unified kind at keeping spending in line with taxes, regardless of which party controls which branch.

"Divided government," Niskanen observes, "is, curiously, less divisive. It's also cheaper. The basic reason for this is simple: when one party proposes drastic or foolish measures"—including spending windfalls designed to reward partisan supporters—"the other party can obstruct them."

All of the administration's tax cuts account for only about a quarter of the deterioration in the ten-year projected budget balance since 2001. The rest is outlays—on defense, and on everything else. Far from restraining spending in order to make room for tax cuts, as a conservative administration and Congress might have been expected to do, the Republican Congress typically added to the spending requests of a fiscally expansive White House—and then cut taxes as well.

As a result, merely reversing the administration's tax cuts will not bring the books into balance. The scale of the fiscal problem demands both tax increases and spending restraint.

History suggests that spending restraint might be the easier part. With Democrats running Congress, the president may for the first time see a spending

bill he does not like, and veto it. And the Democrats, unlike their predecessors, are unlikely simply to endorse and enhance the president's own spending priorities. As the bargains get struck, there is no guarantee that the sides will bargain down rather than up, but the record is encouraging. With luck, the administration and the new Congress might just squabble their way to a sleeker budget.

Taxes could be more difficult. On this the two sides seem more deeply dug in. The president has little to brag about right now except for the tax cuts that so anger the Democrats; to surrender those would be a blow. A deal does look certain on the Alternative Minimum Tax (an anti-avoidance measure aimed at the very rich that is starting to catch millions of the less-than-rich). Both sides agree that something must be done about this—but AMT reform is a tax cut, not a tax increase.

Tax increases are unlikely to happen accidentally, as a natural result of partisan contention. They will require courage and creativity. But a solution is available that practically cries out: the gas tax. Raise it modestly to start with, but announce a schedule of further increases over the next ten years. On grounds of economic efficiency, the case for a bigger gas tax is unassailable. Politically, it could be linked to deeply resonant issues—the environment, energy independence—and might offer a measure of face-saving for the administration. You could sweeten it further: promise up front that 50 percent of the proceeds will go to deficit reduction, and 50 percent to reductions in the Social Security tax, or to an expanded earned-income tax credit (both of which especially help the low-paid).

Fiscal prudence, environmental responsibility, and tax relief tilted to the less well-off—is that such an unappealing compromise, impossible to sell? What is bipartisanship for, if not measures such as this, which require both sides to give ground? People in the White House and on Capitol Hill ought to be thinking it is worth a try. ▀

Clive Crook is an *Atlantic* senior editor.

THE LIST

THE ASHTRAY OF HISTORY

When the French National Library airbrushed the cigarette out of Jean-Paul Sartre's hand in a 2005 poster of the iconic, chain-smoking philosopher, you knew it was only a matter of time. This February, France joins a growing number of jurisdictions that have implemented far-reaching smoke-free legislation—including such unusual suspects as Cuba (after Fidel Castro gave up cigars in 1986) and Hong Kong (which has temporarily exempted mah-jongg parlors and a few other places). But while the current antismoking phenomenon may appear unstoppable, a look back reveals that tobacco bans are hardly new—and rarely permanent. Here are some of the earlier smoke-free movements in history. —ABIGAIL CUTLER

1624: On the logic that tobacco use prompts sneezing, which too closely resembles sexual ecstasy, Pope Urban VIII issues a worldwide smoking ban and threatens excommunication for those who smoke or take snuff in holy places. A century later, snuff-loving Pope Benedict XIII repeals all papal smoking bans, and in 1779, the Vatican opens its own tobacco factory.

1633: Sultan Murad IV prohibits smoking in the Ottoman Empire; as many as eighteen people a day are executed for breaking the law. Murad's successor, Ibrahim the Mad, lifts the ban in 1647, and tobacco soon becomes an elite indulgence—joining coffee, wine, and opium, according to a historian living under Ibrahim's reign, as one of the four "cushions on the sofa of pleasure."

1634: Czar Michael of Russia bans smoking, promising even first-time offenders whippings, floggings, a slit nose, and a one-way trip to Siberia. By 1674, smokers are deemed criminals subject to the death penalty. Two years later, the smoking ban is lifted.

1646: The General Court of Massachusetts Bay prohibits citizens from smoking tobacco except when on a journey and at least five miles away from any town. The next year, the Colony of Connecticut restricts citizens



to one smoke a day, "not in company with any other." Though some statutes remain on the books for decades, enforcement diminishes, and by the early 1700s, New England is a major consumer and producer of tobacco.

1891: Angered by the shah's generous tobacco concession to England, Iranians protest widely, and the Grand Ayatollah Haji Mirza Hasan Shirazi issues a fatwa banning Shiites from using or trading tobacco. The tensions spark the Tobacco Rebellion—the culmination of a long-standing confrontation between Iran's shahs and its clergy over foreign influence. The following year, once the country's business dealings with the Brits are revoked, Iran's Shiites happily resume smoking.

1895: North Dakota bans the sale of cigarettes. Over the next twenty-six years, fourteen other statehouses, propelled by the national temperance movement, follow suit. Antismoking crusader Lucy Gaston announces her candidacy for president in 1920—the same year Warren G. Harding's nomination is decided by Republican Party bosses in a "smoke-filled room." By 1927, all smoke-free legislation—except that banning the sale of cigarettes to minors—is repealed.

1942: Adolf Hitler calls tobacco "the wrath of the Red Man against the White Man, vengeance for having been given hard liquor," and directs one of the most aggressive antismoking campaigns in history, including heavy taxes and bans on smoking in many public places. The country's antismoking movement loses most of its momentum after the Nuremberg trials, and by the mid-1950s, domestic consumption exceeds prewar levels.

WASHINGTON

How a pair of Democratic strategists are helping candidates talk about their faith

Closing the God Gap

BY HANNA ROSIN

Given how well Democrats did in the midterm elections, it's surprising how little they narrowed what is melodically called the "God gap"—the overwhelming Republican advantage among religious voters. To be sure, they did better with white evangelicals than they had in recent years, but still not as well as Bill Clinton did a decade ago. Just 28 percent voted for House Democrats this election cycle, up only 3 points from 2004. "Given all the polling that was done about how evangelicals were frustrated with the Republican Party, I thought [the Democrats would] do better," says John Green, a fellow at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Nationwide, "values voters" remain skeptical of the Democratic Party.

But the picture changes when you zoom in on specific races. In some, Democrats made astonishing gains—of the sort that gets Green talking about "potential historic shifts" in voting blocs that "could dramatically change the relationship between faith and politics in this country," if replicated widely. In the Ohio governor's race, the Democrat Ted Strickland won as many white evangelical votes as the losing Republican, Ken Blackwell—calling to mind the days before the rise of the Christian right in the '60s. In Pennsylvania's Senate race, Bob Casey, another Democrat, won 59 percent of Catholics, creating a bloc of Catholic Democrats harkening back to the 1950s.

Casey is "pro-life," and Strickland a minister, but similar

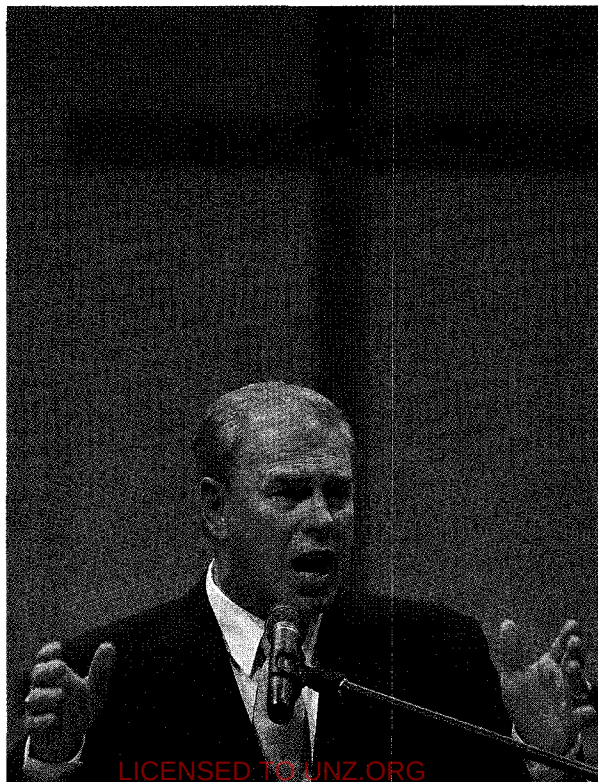
shifts occurred in other races featuring more-traditional Democratic candidates. Michigan's Jennifer Granholm, for instance, a "pro-choice" and relatively liberal governor, won 35 percent of the white evangelical vote, a percentage significantly higher than the House Democratic average. All in all, about a half-dozen races impressed Green as scrambling many of our culture-war assumptions. In each of these races, you can argue about the strength of the opponent and other local dynamics, but all of them turn out to have one thing in common: the winning candidate worked extensively with a small political consulting outfit called Common Good Strategies.

Mara Vanderslice, a thirty-one-year-old born-again Christian, founded Common Good in 2005 and later

brought on Eric Sapp, thirty, as a partner. Both belong to the small but growing club of evangelicals who are also Democrats. Vanderslice had worked on a couple of Democratic presidential campaigns, and she had found that the reactions of many campaign staffers around her ranged from "ambivalent to hostile" when she suggested reaching out to religious voters or constituents. But she and Sapp suspected that while the machinery resisted, the candidates themselves might be amenable. This year, Common Good worked closely with seven candidates, testing a new strategy for Democrats trying to court religious voters. All of these candidates won in November.

In each race, Vanderslice and Sapp began by helping candidates build the infrastructure necessary to reach religious voters, often from scratch. "In many cases our party had completely written them off," says Sapp. In none of the states in which they worked did the Democratic Party have a complete list of pastors, for example, so Common Good staffers created those lists. In Michigan, they met with about 500 conservative and moderate members of the clergy; in many of the meetings, particularly with evangelical ministers, they would hear something like "Where have you all been?" According to Sapp, "At a fundamental level they just want candidates

OHIO GOVERNOR Ted Strickland, speaking during a campaign appearance in November



AP PHOTO/NATI HARNIK

to give God his due, more than they care about specific issues."

Common Good helped recruit pastors to write op-eds in response to criticisms and arranged for campaigns to buy mailing lists of religious-minded voters. Vanderslice and Sapp encouraged candidates to buy ads on Christian radio, a medium considered more intimate than television. Strickland did a large radio buy in July—early enough to look like more than an afterthought. For ten years he'd had a quote from Micah on his office wall: "And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." With uplift-y music in the background, he talked in his ad about how that quote had guided his career and would guide him as governor.

Vanderslice and Sapp helped the candidates create a new language to use in talking about faith and values, aimed in part at neutralizing hot-button issues. On abortion, for instance, they banned the word *choice* and pushed *reduction*, going one step further with Clinton's idea that abortion should be "safe, legal, and rare": "We must work together across our differences to reduce the need and numbers of abortions by reducing unplanned pregnancies and helping women and families get the support they need when facing a crisis pregnancy," read a brochure for Sherrod Brown, the Democratic Senate candidate in Ohio. The idea was that a lot of voters who oppose abortion don't actually want it to be criminalized; they just want the issue to be recognized as important.

The two consultants also advised candidates to attack Republican positions on moral grounds, from the left. Where anti-gay-marriage amendments came up, for example, they expanded the issue and talked about how many marriages were disintegrating because of financial stress, which they name as the No. 1 cause of divorce in America.

Each candidate had a distinctive style, but a few themes recurred: following Christ's example by serving others, promoting the common good, protecting the environment as God's creation,

alleviating poverty—endless references to the underserved and uninsured and out-of-work. "The central question should not be, Are you better off than you were four years ago?" said Casey in a September speech at Catholic University. "It should be, How can we—all of us, especially the weak and vulnerable—be better off in the years ahead?"

Read the speeches and it's impossible to believe the conventional wisdom that these candidates are part of a new wave of "conservative" Democrats—populist, maybe, heirs to William Jennings Bryan or kin to the Sojourners, but definitely not conservative. All of them defy the notion that Democrats can win in competitive districts only by moving to the right.

When Sapp told me people cried during Strickland's August 2005 speech on faith and values at the Columbus Metropolitan Club, I didn't really believe him (who cries at a Metropolitan Club?). But if you read the speech, the crying seems plausible. It is full of a preacher's barely contained rage, ripping into prevailing political hypocrisies without ever sounding political.

The next time some politician, including me, starts preaching to you a sermon on values, look us in the eye and ask us point-blank: Do your values include doing everything in your power to make sure that my hard work translates into a decent living for my family, that we have access to affordable health care, that I can offer my kids a solid, affordable education as far as their abilities will take them? ...

It's necessary to say this, because it seems, as far as the general culture and the press is concerned, one side of the political spectrum is deeply religious and deeply affected by moral values and the other side is not. I'm here to say that's a lie that the truth won't abide.

When asked about values, Democrats have tried this change-the-subject trick before, often with little effect. But spoken repeatedly, by candidates comfortable in the idiom, in media familiar

to religious voters, the message must have come off as sincere. Add a serious outreach effort to pastors, and the Democrats' new words carried surprising weight. Protest votes are one thing, but the sheer size of the shift in religious and evangelical votes in these seven races seems to show that when values voters are taken seriously, they will venture out willingly from the Republican fold.

For Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and secularists in the Democratic Party, or anyone else who just doesn't want to hear a Christian sermon at a campaign rally, this development may be unsettling. At least Strickland is a pastor; Granholm is not, and it can unnerve you to hear a sitting governor tell her listeners that they "were born to make manifest the glory of God," and that "Jesus is in all of our people."

Sapp and Vanderslice, of course, welcome the development. They want religion in the public square, only they want it on their terms. Vanderslice grew up in Colorado, in the shadow of what she calls the "hateful rhetoric" of the religious right. She became a Christian in college, after a moving overseas trip working with missionaries. This year she cherry-picked only candidates with similarly "authentic" stories of faith to tell; by winning, she proved that her brand of idealism has practical applications.

Whether Common Good's strategy can work for the whole party in 2008 remains to be seen. Winning political formulas spread quickly, but not every candidate can pull this one off. Still, Sapp argues, even small changes can make big differences. Not every Democrat has to be a pastor, he says; but put a few authentic Democratic voices on a national stage talking about right and wrong, and the party's image can shift.

At the very least, such a change might take the sting out of the culture wars. If religious voters come up for grabs nationally, both parties will have to try to win them over the old-fashioned way: using substance and politics instead of just rhetoric. ▀

Hanna Rosin, an *Atlantic* contributing editor, is working on a book about young evangelicals.

POLL

WILL MODERATION WIN IN 2008?

The Atlantic recently asked a group of political insiders—selected for their campaign experience, political knowledge, and ties to key voting blocs—about the strength of the religious right and the antiwar left.

Q: Can someone who is opposed by the religious right win the Republican presidential nomination in 2008?

53% YES

"Yes ... The religious right is not monolithic. The various leaders—public figures and behind-the-scenes fund-raisers—will splinter [in 2008], which will lessen their impact on the primaries."

"Given the serious issues confronting our nation and world, and the emerging splits in the primary electorate, ideological purity will become secondary to leadership attributes."

"A candidate who is a positive populist can lead you to independents and evangelicals without having to sell [his] soul to kooks like [James] Dobson and [Pat] Robertson, as [Karl] Rove and [George W.] Bush did. [Ronald] Reagan expanded his base without doing the Rove kowtow."

"Yes. If the Democratic nominee is Senator [Hillary] Clinton, the religious right will vote for any decent Republican."

"Definitely, but unless that person can then get evangelicals to the polls, he loses the general [election]."

41% NO

"The religious right is the least stable part of the GOP coalition, and the coalition is not so big that any element can be jettisoned."

"No, but the GOP nominee cannot win in November if he or she abandons the economic base of the party to court the social wing, as the GOP congressional majority has done for the past two-plus years."

"This will be John McCain's biggest problem. His positions on such issues as immigration and the national marriage amendment are counter to the views of the right and will make it an uphill battle for him."

"No, but [Rudolph] Giuliani will present the toughest test of this proposition."

6% DEPENDS/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)

Q: Can someone who is not clearly identified as an antiwar candidate win the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008?

71% YES

"The '08 nominee will be selected on their plan for the future—dealing with the mess in Iraq—not on how or why we got there."

"Yes. In the end it is a question of trust. Bush's problem is he never admits a mistake. That itself is a mistake."

"Absolutely yes. Someone who favored the war, as did a majority of Americans, can bring us back together in the wake of this tragic mistake."

"Yes, but it will be difficult. In the last election, Howard Dean's early appeal was his opposition to the war, and while that wasn't enough to win him the nomination, it was the only thing that made him a viable candidate. Things have not gotten any better, so opposition to the war—or a thoughtful approach that is very different from the current situation—will be popular."

"Yes. Hillary [Clinton] can and probably will win."

"For the sake of the national aspirations of the Democratic Party, I hope so. The Connecticut Senate race is a highly instructive and cautionary tale in that regard."

26% NO

"I think a good deal of what we are seeing in the national dissatisfaction with the Republicans is their positioning on Iraq. There are other issues, but [America's] international blunders create an amazing dilemma for them. I can't imagine a rationale for a Democratic candidate that doesn't begin and end with the war."

"Every serious Democratic candidate will position themselves as strongly antiwar, including Senator Clinton. Some candidates will have more credibility as an antiwar candidate than others, but they will all be antiwar."

3% DEPENDS/DON'T KNOW (VOLUNTEERED)

This poll was sent out to 176 political insiders from both parties. Seventy Republican insiders responded to the first question; sixty-eight Democratic insiders responded to the second. The full list of panelists can be seen at www.theatlantic.com/januarypoll.

PHOTO BY BROOKS KRAFT/CORBIS



A black and white photograph showing the front interior of a car. The view is from the passenger side looking towards the driver's seat. The leather-upholstered seats have a quilted pattern. The center console with the gear shifter is visible. The dashboard and steering wheel are partially seen in the background.

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SUBARU

PRIMARY SOURCES

TERRORISM

The Jihadist Mind

Osama bin Laden may be America's public enemy No. 1, but his intellectual influence is relatively limited, according to a new analysis of jihadist thought conducted by the West Point-based Combatting Terrorism Center. Researchers there spent a year analyzing material from al-Qaeda's online library and found that the most influential writers—as measured by citations in other works—are figures from the distant past, led by Ibn Taymiyya, a medieval legal scholar whose calls for holy war against Mongol invaders are particularly popular with present-day jihadists. The most-cited twentieth-century writer is Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian intellectual often regarded as the leading theorist of modern Islamism, while the most-cited living thinker is Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a Palestinian-born cleric based in Jordan. (Overall, the center notes, "the most influential Jihadi intellectuals

are clerics from Jordan and Saudi Arabia, two of the US's closest allies in the Middle East.") Bin Laden is cited frequently, but the study's analysis suggests that he isn't the "key broker of information" in the jihadist intellectual network, and that his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, often depicted as al-Qaeda's chief theoretician, is "totally insignificant." The report also suggests several ways the West could wage a more successful war of ideas, from labeling jihadists "Qutbists" (it's what rival Muslims call them, and it's "a designation Jihadis hate since it implies that they follow a human and are members of a deviant sect") to working with "non-violent Salafi leaders" (like Saudi clerics, for instance) whose politics may be otherwise distasteful to us, because "they are best positioned to delegitimize Jihadi violence and monitor the activities of the more militant elements of their movement."

—Militant Ideology Atlas, *Combating Terrorism Center*

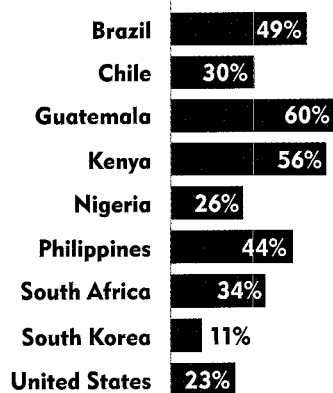
RELIGION

Baptism by Fire

Pentecostalism, which emphasizes personal religious experience and the "gifts of the Holy Spirit" (speaking in tongues, prophecy, and spiritual healing), is one of the fastest-growing segments of Christendom—and perhaps the least understood. Researchers at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life recently tried to shed some light on the subject, surveying Pentecostals and Charismatics—Christians who don't belong to an explicitly Pentecostal denomination but who describe themselves as "charismatic" or report speaking in tongues—in ten countries on four continents. They found that these "Renewalists" (as Pentecostals and Charismatics are collectively known) constitute large and growing chunks of the faithful—23 percent of people in the United States, for instance, are either Pentecostal or Charismatic, and the percentage climbs to 56 percent in Kenya and 60 percent in Guatemala. In many countries, particularly traditionally Catholic strongholds, Renewalists now constitute the vast majority of Protestants—72 percent of Brazilian Protestants are Pentecostals, for instance.

CATCH THE SPIRIT

Estimated proportion of "Renewalist" Christians as a percentage of total population



Overall, Renewalists are generally more likely than other Christians to report having witnessed exorcisms and divine healings; to be biblical literalists; to be active in politics; and to disapprove of alcohol, divorce, and abortion.

—"Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*

HEALTH

The Minty Death

Smoking is not an equal-opportunity killer, according to a new fifteen-year study of American smokers. Blacks who habitually light up tend to get sicker and die sooner than whites, due in part to their preference for menthol cigarettes. Blacks favor menthol cigarettes by a ratio of eight-to-one, whereas fewer than one in three white smokers prefer menthol brands. Cigarette by cigarette, menthols are no more deadly than unflavored tobacco. But researchers found that menthol smokers were twice as likely as non-menthol smokers to relapse after quitting, primarily because menthol causes smokers to metabolize nicotine more slowly, effectively increasing the amount of nicotine ingested per cigarette smoked and therefore the intensity of the addiction.

—"Menthol Cigarettes, Smoking Cessation, Atherosclerosis, and Pulmonary Function," *Mark J. Pletcher, Benjamin J. Hulley, et al., Archives of Internal Medicine*

PERSONAL FINANCE

The (High) Wages of Sin

Drinking may impair your motor skills and romantic judgment, but—if you're a man, at least—it can fatten your wallet, two new studies suggest. In the first, a pair of health economists found that American males who drank heavily when they were tenth-graders in 1990 earned more money in 2000, on average, than their peers who were teetotalers as teens. (The researchers found no such link for women.) Meanwhile, a study from the libertarian Reason Foundation reports that self-described drinkers (male and female) earn 10 percent to 14 percent more than nondrinkers. Drinking, the authors argue, may help build the kinds of social networks that lead to workplace success. The Reason study also finds that men who frequent bars at least once a month earn a further 7 percent wage boost. For women, however, regular barhopping has no discernible effect—on earnings, anyway.

—"High School Alcohol Use and Young Adult Labor Market Outcomes," *Pinka Chatterji and Jeffrey DeSimone, National Bureau of Economic Research; "No Booze? You May Lose," Bethany L. Peters and Edward P. Stringham, Reason Foundation*

GOING TO PARIS THE FIRST TIME: \$865

GOING TO PARIS THE SECOND TIME: \$3,027

GOING TO PARIS THE THIRD TIME: \$4,897



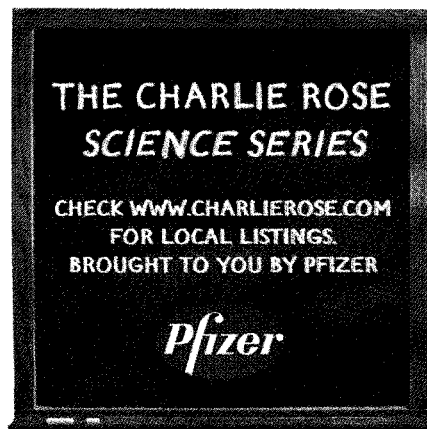
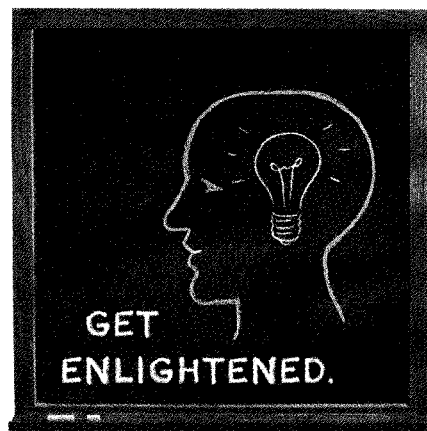
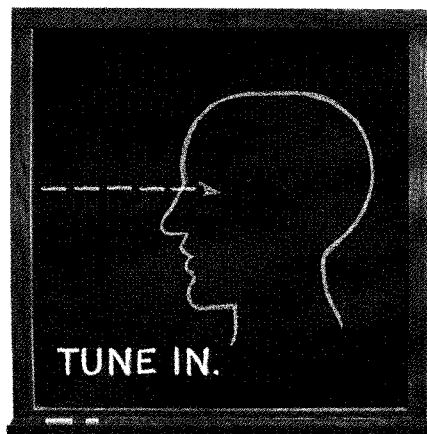
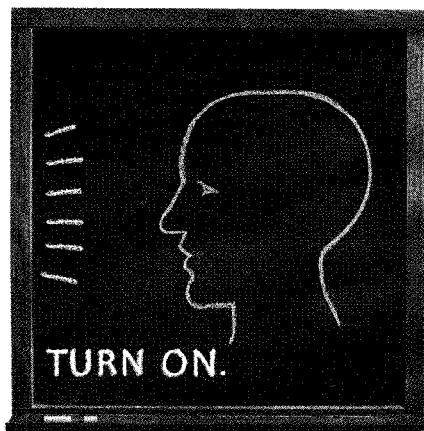
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SEXUALITY

Leaving the Closet

The number of gay couples in America—or at least the number willing to identify themselves as gay in government surveys—grew by more than 30 percent between 2000 and 2005, five times the growth rate for the U.S. population as a whole, a new paper reports. The largest percentage increase in self-identified same-sex couples occurred in the Midwest, and the study notes that the percentage of same-sex couples rose faster than the national average in six of the eight states where a ban on same-sex marriage appeared on the 2006 ballot. (The ballot initiatives passed in seven of the eight states, with Arizona the lone exception.) The study estimates a nationwide total of 8.8 million gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans, roughly 3 percent of the population. The states with the largest gay populations are California, Florida, New York, Texas, and Illinois while the greatest proportion of gay

COMING OUT

Largest percentage increase in same-sex couples, 2000 to 2005

1. New Hampshire	106%
2. Wisconsin	81%
3. Minnesota	76%
4. Nebraska	71%
5. Kansas	68%
6. Ohio	62%
7. Colorado	58%
8. Iowa	58%
9. Missouri	56%
10. Indiana	54%

residents can be found in the District of Columbia, New Hampshire, Washington, Massachusetts, and Maine.

—“Same-Sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey,” Gary J. Gates, the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy

SOCIETY

Bowling Together

Ah, the suburbs—the land of anomie and alienation, sterile cul-de-sacs and big-box stores. Except that suburban sprawl might actually be good for your social life and your involvement in the community, a new study suggests. Two economists tracked the relationship between low-density living and social interaction, using data from a nationwide study. They found that Americans who live in lower-density—that is, more-suburban—neighborhoods

have more friends overall, are more likely to spend time with their neighbors, and are more likely to belong to local clubs or social groups than are urbanites. The study suggests several explanations: cities offer more distractions, which may make neighborliness less important to one's social life; overcrowding may lead people to “draw inward”; and high urban crime rates may erode trust among neighbors.

—“Social Interaction and Urban Sprawl,” Jan K. Brueckner (University of California, Irvine) and Ann G. Largey (Dublin City University Business School)

THE WORKPLACE

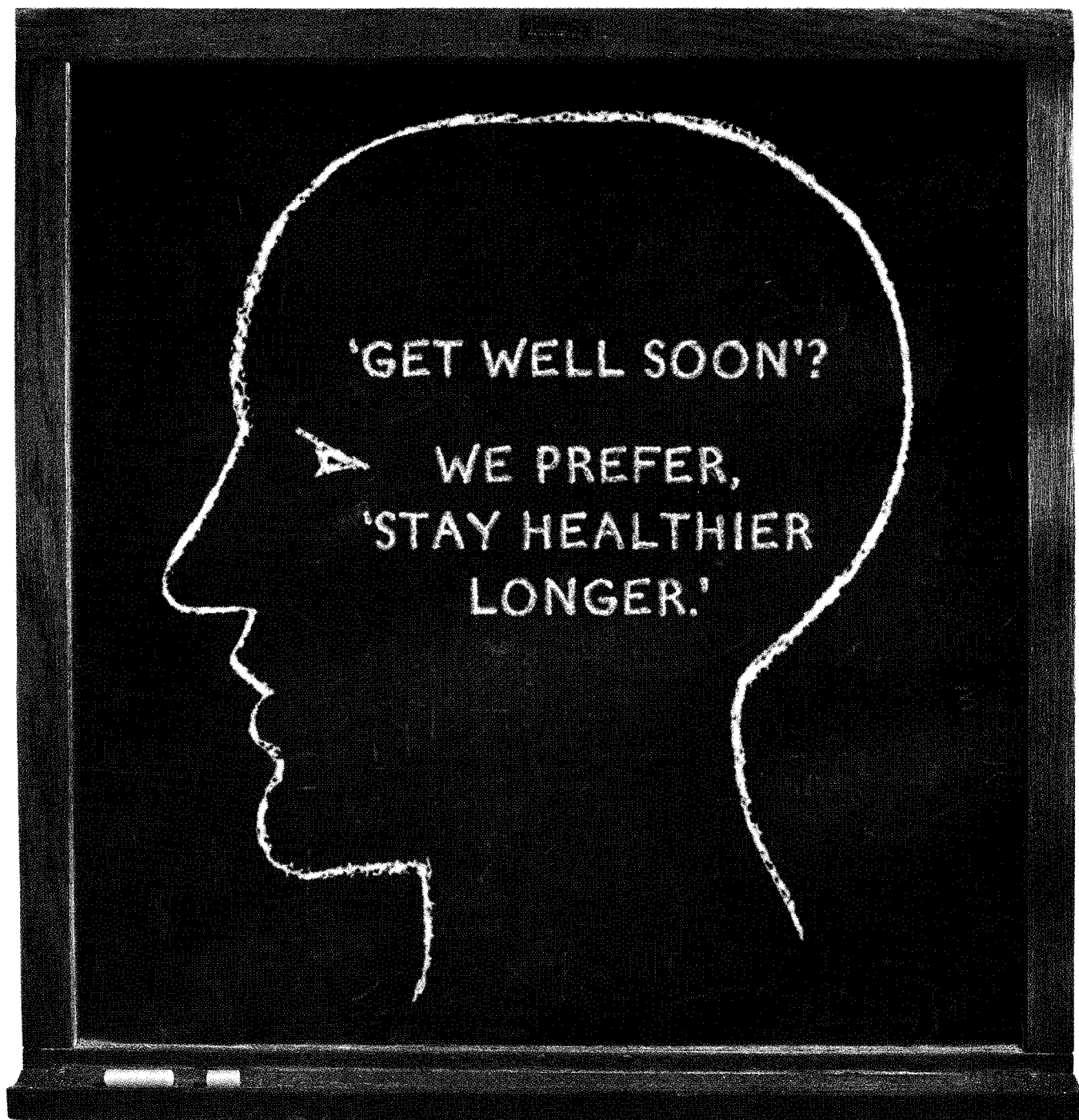
Upward Mobility

Social scientists have long been aware that tall people, on average, earn more money and attain higher-status jobs than their shorter competitors. A variety of explanations have been offered for this phenomenon: for jobs requiring manual labor, height tends to correlate with better health and greater physical strength; in white-collar work, tall workers may be perceived as socially dominant and rewarded accordingly. But now two Princeton economists suggest a simpler explanation: taller people are just smarter. Beginning at age three (that is, before schooling begins to affect test scores), tall children score significantly higher on cognitive tests, the authors point out. These taller children

tend to become taller-than-average adults, and the study—using data from the United States and Britain—shows that the differences in childhood cognitive ability explain most or all of the premium enjoyed by tall adults. When researchers control for childhood test scores, the wage gap disappears. A possible cause of this height-brains link, the authors suggest, is prenatal and childhood nutrition, which has been shown to have a strong effect on both height and cognitive ability.

—“Stature and Status: Height, Ability, and Labor Market Outcomes,” Anne Case and Christina Paxson, National Bureau of Economic Research

For links to the documents discussed on this page, visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200701/primarysources.



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POST MORTEM

Betty Comden (1917-2006)

Opting for Wit Over Sincerity

BY MARK STEYN

In 1962, after two decades apiece with Lorenz Hart and then Oscar Hammerstein, Richard Rodgers found himself flying solo—writing both music and words—for a show called *No Strings*. Must have seemed a bit lonely, eh? Not at all. Recalling the erratic first-night behavior of his first lyricist, Rodgers exulted, “You can’t imagine how wonderful it feels to have written this score and not have to search all over the globe for that drunken little fag.”

Most halves of most double acts have felt like that at one time or another. Which is why, from Gilbert and Sullivan to Martin and Lewis, showbiz partners rarely waited till death do them part. But Comden and Green stuck it out, all the way until that bleak day in November 2002, when Betty Comden found herself standing onstage at the Shubert Theatre for Adolph Green’s Broadway memorial service. “It’s lonely up here,” she said.

It must have been. In the preceding two-thirds of a century, they’d written hit shows (*On the Town*), hit films (*Singin’ in the Rain*), hit songs (“Just in Time”), and a lot of stuff that wasn’t so boffo but that they kept in their stage act out of parental affection, like the 1970s revue number sung by two schoolchildren in a brave new world where everything has been “simplified.” For example, instead of a *penis* or *vagina*, everyone now has a *penina*. And as Comden and Green would then sing:

Oh, nothing could be finer
than to play with my penina
If you will show me yours-a, then
I will show you mine-a.

Performing in the early 1990s, Comden and Green—pushing eighty but bouncing around the stage like a pair of

gleeful schoolkids—seemed a far more startling glimpse of another world than the characters in the song: it was a vaudeville number for the age of political correctness. Who other than Comden and Green would write such a thing? They were writers who were always performers at heart: Fred Astaire recalled sitting in Arthur Freed’s office listening to them read through the script for *The Barkleys of Broadway* (1949) and fretting that he’d never be able to do the role as well as Green. In part because Oscar Levant and Nanette Fabray played them as a husband-and-wife writing team in *The Band Wagon* (1953), folks tended to assume they were married. “We are,” Betty would say. “But not to each other.” Still, their union lasted longer than most marriages.

They were showbiz professionals. Instead of sitting around waiting for the news to show up, they liked to be offered assignments—even if they didn’t always accept them. In the ’50s, with Leonard Bernstein, they were asked to adapt *Pygmalion* into a musical. They arranged a screening of the film—and liked it too much. “It’s too good,” said Betty. “Leave it alone.” Lerner and Loewe declined to leave it alone, and the result was *My Fair Lady*. Bernstein later came to them for *West Side Story* (1957), but they didn’t think it was their bag. “That wasn’t such a smart move, either,” Miss Comden recalled. At MGM, they didn’t have the luxury of being so picky.

Arthur Freed, the preeminent producer of musicals in the postwar era, had started out as a lyricist in the ’20s. One day in the early ’50s, he called Comden and Green into his office. “Kids, I want you to take all my old songs and make a picture out of them. We’re gonna call it *Singin’ in the Rain*.”

“All we knew,” Comden told me, “is that somewhere we’d have to have a scene where it was raining and a guy was singing.” “In it,” added Green. But that was enough to work with.

They seemed an odd couple when I first encountered them: Green a madcap elf full of manic energy, Comden a coolly elegant brunette. Even perched on the sofa arm with her pedal pushers dangling, she always looked poised. Whereas, even in a tux, Green always looked chaotic. In writing sessions, he paced, she typed.

They met seventy years ago, when Betty was a starry-eyed hick just arrived in the glittering metropolis from her dusty one-horse rural flag stop: Brooklyn. “Arriving in Manhattan from Brooklyn,” she wrote, “I felt like a kid from a small town, clutching her straw suitcases, and staring up at the Big Town for the first time. It was madly glamorous.”

It stayed that way. Comden and Green never tired of writing screen and stage valentines to “New York, New York / A helluva town”—by which they meant Manhattan. “The Bronx is up / And the Battery’s down”—and Brooklyn isn’t even on the map. As the predatory lady cab driver says to the sailors on the lam in *On the Town* (1944),

“I know a place across the Brooklyn Bridge where they’ll never find us.”

“Where?”

“Brooklyn.”

They turned to writing in their early twenties. They had formed a Greenwich Village nightclub act and, having no material, were forced to supply it themselves. The act was called the Revuers, and even though they were so-so performers and great writers, a part of Comden and Green continued to think of themselves as Revuers right up to the end.

If you went to a showbiz party in New York or Hollywood and folks started drifting toward the piano, chances are it would be to hear Betty and Adolph, with Leonard Bernstein or Andre Previn or Cy Coleman at the keyboard, doing a couple of larkly parodies.

Bernstein loved them because they were a mine of knowledge about great art but also a great laugh, a balancing act Lenny himself eventually lost the knack of. That spirit of literate knockabout—the highbrow lowbrow—was embodied in their song “Catch Our Act at the Met,” in which two vaudevillians celebrate Rudolf Bing’s showbizification of the opera and contemplate making it big in all the leading roles:

You play Tristan, and I’ll play Isolde.
You play Rodolfo, and I’ll play Mimi.
You play Lucia, and I’ll play Sextet.
By Don Ameche?
No, Donizetti.

As a little girl in Brooklyn, Betty once tried to steal a pair of candlesticks from a local emporium. Caught in mid-heist, the shoplifter was forced to write an apology to the shop owners—her aunt and uncle—but signed it jauntily “Betty the Bobbed-Haired Bandit.” As she explained years later, “I opted for ‘wit’ over sincerity.”

And so she did, for the most part. But beginning with *Bells Are Ringing* (1956), Jule Styne (at that time Broadway’s most successful composer) brought forth from Comden and Green a series of great lasting love songs. “They write with me like they write with nobody. Nobody!” Styne once told me with his customary understatement. “Sure, they can write funny, but all their best pop lyrics, they wrote with me!” Hard to disagree: “Just in Time,” “The Party’s Over,” “Make Someone Happy.” That last is one a remarkable number of songwriters love to cite as a favorite lyric:

Fame
If you win it
Comes and goes
In a minute
Where’s the real stuff in life to cling to?



BETTY COMDEN and Adolph Green

I wonder whether Betty Comden ever asked herself that question. In 1995, she published a curious memoir called *Off Stage*. “Can you believe it?” another songwriter asked me in amazement and disgust. “Betty Comden’s written a book, and there’s nothing about her work in it!” To be sure, there were some platitudinous pen portraits of pals like Bernstein and Lauren Bacall. But the heart of the book was an account of her son’s descent into heroin addiction and death from AIDS. Her husband, Steven Kyle, had been a stay-at-home dad while she was off breadwinning in Hollywood and the West End, and in her book Miss Comden pondered whether her career had been at least a contributing factor in her son’s decline and death.

She once spoke to me about her tunnel vision when working on a new musical. “Someone says, ‘Did you hear? A nuclear bomb went off,’ and you think, ‘Gee, will that hurt us at the box office?’” In her book, she wondered whether she might be “more talented” at being a mother “now that I have lived it once,” and offered a fantasy chapter titled “Her Second Chance,” a kind of remake of her son’s life and problems as they might have turned out were she writing it within the conventions of stage and screen. The bleakly honest account of the loss of a child was a rare glimpse of a Betty Comden who was otherwise professionally cheery, and the fictional rewrite seemed a sad acknowledgment that, for all her claims about the “integrated musical” and its dramatic credibility,

her chosen form was in the end unable to embrace the complete tapestry of life.

In their more ambitious work, Comden and Green liked to freight the wacky gags with some kind of subtext. As they saw it, *On the Town* was really about what everyone who’s lived through a war well understands: the peculiar intensity of the present tense. At a time of uncertainty, explained Comden and Green, their show was about “the poignancy of young people trying to cram a lifetime of experiences into a day.” And so, at the end of that day, three sailors and their three gals have no sooner fallen in love than they have to part:

Where has the time all gone to?
Haven’t done half the things we want to.
Oh well, we’ll catch up
Some other time.

It’s a catchpenny sentiment, but it’s enlarged by the situation—by the fact of the war. These sailors will kiss their girls and go away, and the “some other time” won’t be Thursday night or next weekend; there may, in fact, never be “some other time.” The show’s director was the Broadway veteran George Abbott, who helped make *On the Town* a hit for its neophyte composer, lyricists, choreographer, and producers. Years later, I put to him the points I made above—ordinary situation, ostensibly regular boy-meets-girl love song, but transformed into something deeper by the great geopolitical conflict in which they were caught up, their romance now shadowed by uncertainty, etc. Mr. Abbott, at the age of 106, snorted impatiently.

“We didn’t think about that,” he said. “We thought, ‘What’s funny?’”

Which isn’t a bad way to look at it. What’s funny? For six decades, Comden and Green were funny—onstage, on screen, on record, and in sung acceptance speeches (something of a specialized skill). At a time when Broadway musicals have lost their sense of humor, that’s an honorable legacy. ▀

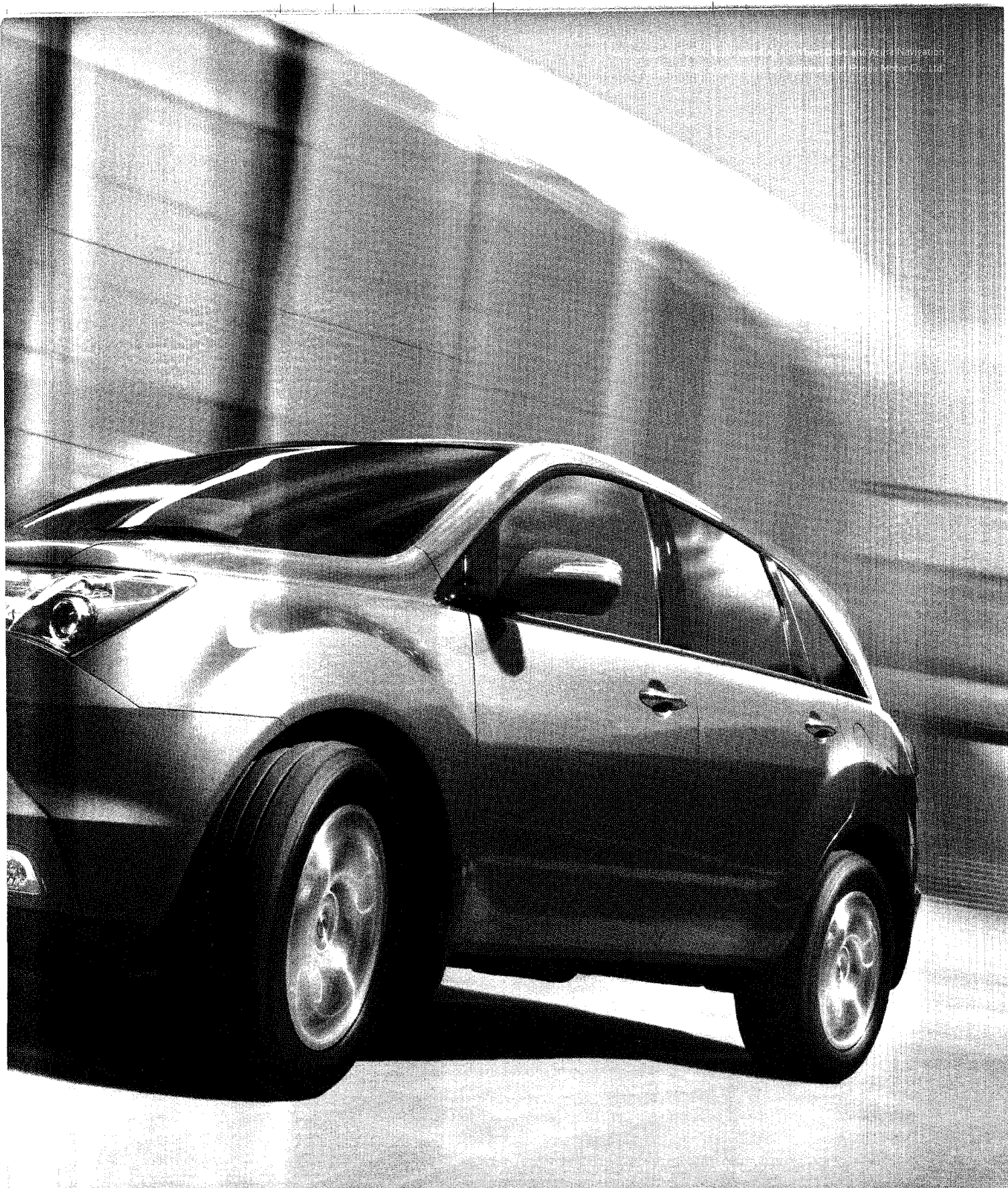
Mark Steyn is a columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and other publications. He is the author of *America Alone*.

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Science

DARWIN ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

July 1860

BY ASA GRAY

*Several months after the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, the Harvard botany professor, Asa Gray, a friend of Darwin's, defended the book's controversial theory of evolution.*

We cling to a long-accepted theory, just as we cling to an old suit of clothes ... New notions and new styles worry us, till we get well used to them, which is only by slow degrees ...

Such being our habitual state of mind, it may well be believed that the perusal of the new book "*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*" left an uncomfortable impression ...

[But] surely the scientific mind of an age which contemplates the solar system as evolved from a common, revolving, fluid mass,—which, through experimental research, has come to regard light, heat, electricity, magnetism, chemical affinity, and mechanical power as varieties or derivative and convertible forms of one force, instead of independent species,—which has brought the so-called elementary kinds of matter, such as the metals, into kindred groups ... the mind of such an age cannot be expected to let the old belief about species pass unquestioned.

Vol. 6, No. 33, pp. 109–116

MARS

May 1895

BY PERCIVAL LOWELL

Following an Italian astronomer's 1877 discovery of what appeared to be canals on the planet Mars, the astronomer Percival Lowell (brother of the poet Amy Lowell) began to investigate the possibility of Martian life. In a four-part Atlantic series, he laid out the evidence. Lowell later went on to predict the existence of Pluto, and to initiate the investigation that led to its discovery after his death.

Amid the seemingly countless stars that on a clear night spangle the vast dome overhead, there appeared last autumn to be a new-comer, a very large and ruddy one, that rose at sunset through the haze about the horizon. That star was the planet Mars, so conspicuous when in such position as often to be taken for a portent ... From [Mars] ... of all the heavenly bodies, may we expect first to learn something beyond celestial mechanics, beyond even celestial chemistry; something in answer to the mute query that man instinctively makes as he gazes at the stars, whether there be life in worlds other than his own.

Hitherto the question has received no affirmative reply, although the trend of all latter-day investigation has been to such affirmation; for science has been demonstrating more and more clearly the essential oneness of the universe. Matter

proves to be common property. We have learnt that the very same substances with which we are familiar on this our earth, iron, magnesium, calcium, and the rest, are present in the far-off stars that strew the depths of space. Nothing new under the sun! Indeed, there is nothing new above it but ever-varying detail. So much for matter. As for mind beyond the confines of our tiny globe, modesty, backed by a probability little short of demonstration, forbids the thought that we are the sole thinkers in this great universe.

Vol. 75, No. 451, pp. 594–603

IN THE NOON OF SCIENCE

September 1912

BY JOHN BURROUGHS

John Burroughs, a naturalist and popular essayist whose circle of friends included Walt Whitman, John Muir, and Theodore Roosevelt, noted in 1912 that the growing primacy of science was bringing about a new, more dispassionate and mechanistic view of the world.

With the rise of the scientific habit of mind has come the decline in great creative literature and art. With the spread of education based upon scientific principles, originality in mind and in character fades ...

In the light of physical science our bodies are mere machines, and every

Truth be told, I'm as financially ambitious as I am socially conscious.



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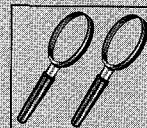
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emotion of our souls is accounted for by molecular changes in the brain-substance. Life itself is explained in terms of chemico-mechanical principles ...

[But] let us give physical science its due ... The sources and nature of disease, the remedial forces of nature, the chemical compounds, the laws of hygiene and sanitation, the value of foods, and a thousand other things beyond the reach of our unaided experience, are in the keeping of science ... It is only when we arm our faculties with the ideas and with the weapons of science that we appreciate the grandeur of the voyage we are making on this planet. It is only through science that we know we are on a planet, and are heavenly voyagers at all.

Vol. 110, No. 3, pp. 322-331

FROM PLATO TO MAX PLANCK: THE PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS OF ATOMIC PHYSICS

November 1959

BY WERNER HEISENBERG

In 1959, the physicist and philosopher Werner Heisenberg—developer of the uncertainty principle and winner of a 1932 Nobel Prize—explained how atomic physics was reshaping modern notions of reality.

There are large areas of experience which cannot be even approximately described with the concepts of classical physics.

In these areas of atomic physics, a great deal of the earlier intuitive physics has gone by the board—not only the applicability of its concepts and laws but the entire notion of reality which underlay the exact sciences until our present-day atomic physics ...

If the quantum theory is correct ... elemental particles are not real in the same sense as the things in our daily lives—for example, trees or stones—are

real; they appear as abstractions derived from observed material which in a literal sense is real. Now, if it is impossible to ascribe existence in the strictest sense to these elemental particles, it is difficult to regard matter as truly real ...

We cannot escape the conclusions that our earlier notions of reality are no longer applicable.

Vol. 204, No. 5, pp. 109-113

THE DOUBLE HELIX

January 1968

BY JAMES D. WATSON

Fifteen years after James D. Watson (then only twenty-five) and Francis Crick discovered the structure of DNA, Watson wrote an in-depth, and often humorous, account of the experience.

I have never seen Francis Crick in a modest mood. Perhaps in other company he is that way, but I have never had reason so to judge him. It has nothing to do with his present fame. Already he is much talked about, usually with reverence, and someday he may be considered in the category of Rutherford or Bohr. But this was not true when, in the fall of 1951, I came to the Cavendish Laboratory of Cambridge University to join a small group of physicists and chemists working on the three-dimensional structures of proteins. At that time he was thirty-five, yet almost totally unknown. Although some of his closest colleagues realized the value of his quick, penetrating mind and frequently sought his advice, he was often not appreciated, and most people thought he talked too much ...

It was [biophysicist Maurice] Wilkins who had first excited me about X-ray work on DNA. This happened at Naples when a small scientific meeting was held on the structures of the large molecules found in living cells. Then it was the spring of 1951, before I knew of Francis Crick's existence. Already I

was much involved with DNA, since I was in Europe on a postdoctoral fellowship to learn its biochemistry. My interest in DNA had grown out of a desire, first picked up while a senior in college, to learn what the gene was. Later, in graduate school at Indiana University, it was my hope that the gene might be solved without my learning any chemistry. This wish partially arose from laziness since, as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, I was principally interested in birds and managed to avoid taking any chemistry or physics courses which looked of even medium difficulty. Briefly, the Indiana biochemists encouraged me to learn organic chemistry, but after I used a Bunsen burner to warm up some benzene, I was relieved from further true chemistry. It was safer to turn out an uneducated Ph.D. than to risk another explosion ...

From my first day in [biochemist Max Perutz's lab at Cambridge University] I knew I would not leave Cambridge for a long time. Departing would be idiocy, for I had immediately discovered the fun of talking to Francis Crick. Finding someone in Max's lab who knew that DNA was more important than proteins was real luck ... Our lunch conversations quickly centered on how genes were put together. Within a few days after my arrival, we knew what to do: imitate Linus Pauling [discoverer of the α -helix] and beat him at his own game ...

The key to Linus' success was his reliance on the simple laws of structural chemistry. The α -helix had not been found by only staring at X-ray pictures; the essential trick, instead, was to ask which atoms like to sit next to each other. In place of pencil and paper, the main working tools were a set of molecular models superficially resembling the toys of preschool children.

We could thus see no reason why we should not solve DNA in the same way. All we had to do was to construct a set of molecular models and begin to play—with luck, the structure would be a helix.

Vol. 221, No. 1, pp. 76-99

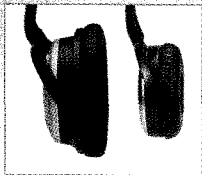
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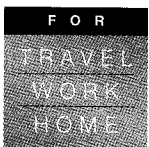


QC2 headphones (left).
New QC3 headphones (right).

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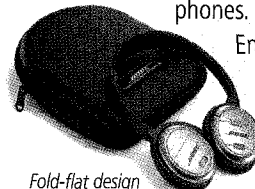
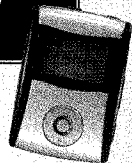


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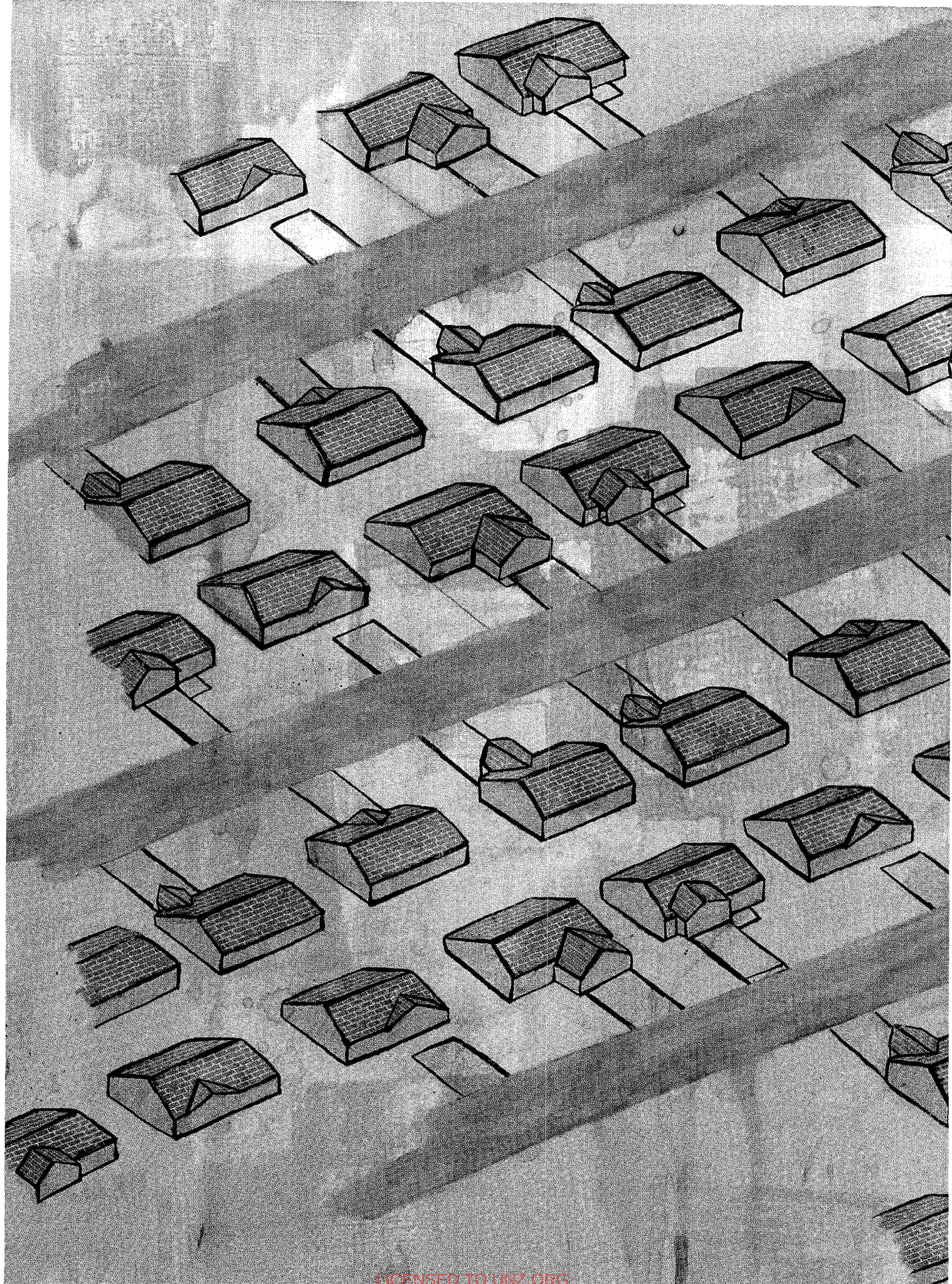


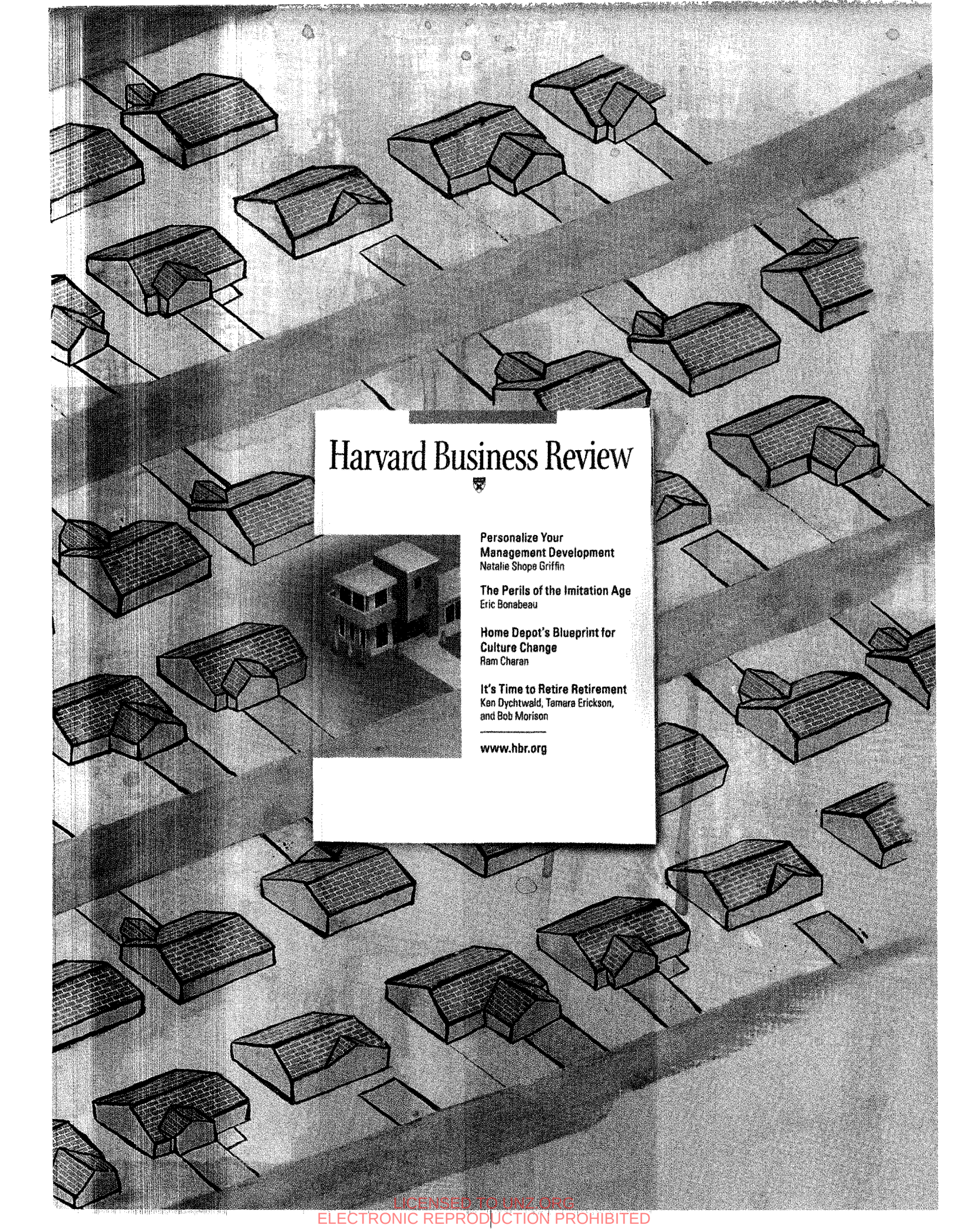
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Harvard Business Review



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Eric Bonabeau

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Ram Charan

It's Time to Retire Retirement
Ken Dychtwald, Tamara Erickson,
and Bob Morison

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From Washington to FDR to Nixon, presidents have always lied.
Here's what makes George W. Bush different.

BY CARL M. CANNON

Untruth and Consequences

Illustrations by Steve Brodner

In 1944, Harry Truman was asked by his friend and Senate colleague Owen Brewster what Franklin Roosevelt was really like. Truman hadn't gotten to know his running mate very well, but the Democratic vice-presidential nominee had spent enough time around FDR to provide a succinct answer.

"He lies," Truman replied.

At that point, the most consequential issue the president was untruthful about was his health. Roosevelt was failing rapidly, as his physicians knew, and as those around the White House could not help but notice. With the Allies opening a second front in Europe and island-hopping

across the Pacific, the commander in chief was working at most four hours a day, and sometimes as little as one or two. On March 28 that year, Dr. Howard G. Bruenn, Roosevelt's cardiologist, had given his diagnosis: hypertension, hypertensive heart disease, cardiac failure, and acute bronchitis. The president's condition, Bruenn later



explained to Jan Kenneth Herman, editor of *Navy Medicine*, was “god-awful.”

The American public, and the world, received a far different image: that of a jaunty, robust president preparing to crush Hitler and the Japanese empire while cruising to an unprecedented fourth term. Truman quickly became complicit in this deception. The Missouri senator—considered then and now a straight shooter—went to lunch at the White House on August 18 and told reporters afterward that Roosevelt “looked fine and ate a bigger lunch than I did.”

But Truman provided a different account in the privacy of his Senate office. “I had no idea he was in such feeble condition,” he confided to his military aide Harry Vaughan, noting that when the president poured cream into his coffee, more went into the saucer than into the cup. Winston Churchill had seen with his own eyes evidence of FDR’s physical decline the year before, in 1943, but raised no objection to the American administration’s deception—Roosevelt was too important to the war effort. That same year, at a conference in Tehran in which the Allies discussed opening new fronts against Nazi Germany, Churchill stressed the need to keep the Allies’ plans secret. To Joseph Stalin, he said, “In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”

“Churchill’s line is par for the course in wartime, when you have to keep your secrets to yourself,” Sean Wilentz, a professor of history at Princeton, told me this summer when we discussed the morality, and the utility, of shading the truth in the White House. “Presidents lie for all

kinds of reasons,” he added. “Richard Nixon lied because he was trying to save his presidency, which was imperiled by his misdeeds. Franklin Delano Roosevelt misled the country over things like Lend-Lease in order to advance a policy he thought would save the world, but which he knew would be difficult to sell politically. Honesty doesn’t necessarily make for an effective presidency ... What the public has to judge is whether [presidents] are lying for the good of the country—or for their own good.”

Wilentz’s interest in this question is not entirely academic. In December 1998, he spoke passionately before the House Judiciary Committee against the articles of impeachment leveled against President Clinton, the most serious of which was lying under oath. Wilentz argued that Clinton’s transgressions, stemming as they did from personal—not official—conduct, simply were not what the Founders envisioned when they gave Congress the remedy of impeachment. “As a historian,” he told Congress, “it is clear to me the impeachment of President Clinton would do greater damage ... to those institutions and to the rule of law, much greater damage, than the crimes of which President Clinton has been accused.” Clinton initially staked his political survival on proving his veracity. When that was found wanting, his advocates successfully argued that perjury was too grave a charge to apply to purely private behavior.

In his second term, George W. Bush faces a credibility crisis of his own. And while the current president may not share his predecessor’s earthy predilections, he also doesn’t have the same excuse, a wish to protect his private

life. Bush is accused of equivocating not about his personal life but about one of the most fundamental public-policy decisions a democracy can confront: the decision to take the nation to war.

For the past year and a half, a majority of Americans have expressed doubts that the president's reasons for ordering the military to invade Iraq were those he articulated publicly. An April 2005 Gallup Poll found that a majority of Americans believed Bush "deliberately misled the American public" about whether Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. In May 2006, 46 percent of respondents in an ABC News/*Washington Post* survey said they believed that the Bush administration had said "what it believed to be true" in making its case for Iraq, while 52 percent said that it had "intentionally misled the American public."

Bush loyalists have blamed the media for such perceptions, but even allowing for a heavy dose of anti-Bush feeling on the part of the networks, news outlets, and publishing houses, much of the American public has altered its opinion regarding the veracity of the man in the Oval Office. Bush's place in history, however, will depend not on *whether* he lied to the American people—every president, arguably, has succumbed to that temptation—but *how* he lied, what consequences his lying unleashed, and how he ultimately responded to them. Put bluntly, posterity will judge the current president not so much by whether he told the truth but by whether he recognized what the truth actually was.

Why do presidents lie? Do they lie more than most people? Are lies of omission essentially the same as lies of commission? What about presidents who convince themselves of things that are untrue—who are, we would say, "in denial"? Is this tantamount to lying? Can presidents be truly effective without lying—or are there times when they simply must engage in deception? If so, when? And how is the public to know whether presidents are abusing that prerogative?

The first question might be the easiest to answer: presidents lie because they are human.

"Everybody lies," says Charles Ford, a professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the author of a book about the psychology of deceit. "It is part of human nature, ubiquitous in the animal kingdom. However, some people lie compulsively, often when the truth would serve them better."

Admonitions against lying are as old as Western civilization itself, but the Ninth Commandment was applied to the

presidency by the first presidential biographer—a parson named Mason Locke Weems, who not only launched the cult of the president-as-truth-teller but did so retroactively with that famous, but unverifiable, cherry-tree story. Ever since, historical revisionism notwithstanding, American schoolchildren have been raised on the standard of a U.S. president who didn't lie—couldn't lie—even as a six-year-old boy. Abraham Lincoln was said to have walked miles as an Illinois store clerk to return a few cents' change. His "Honest Abe" nickname, which predated his presidency, was an advantage that his opponent Stephen Douglas tried to erase by calling him "two-faced." (Lincoln's response:

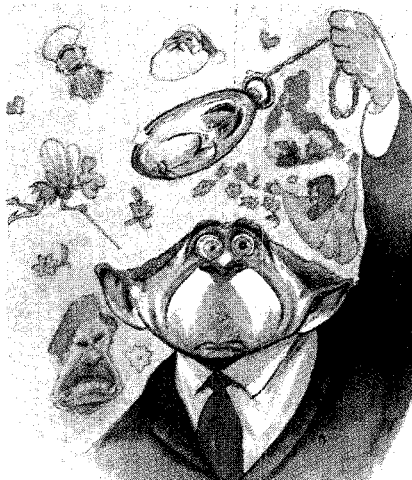
"I leave it to [my audience]. If I had another face, do you think I'd wear this one?") Mark Twain deadpanned that Americans held their presidents to a standard few mortals could meet. "I am different from [George] Washington," he would say. "I have a higher and grander standard of principle. Washington could not lie. I *can* lie, but I *won't*."

Presidents prevaricate for the reasons other people do: pathology, politeness, paternalism, convenience, shame, self-promotion, insecurity, ego, narcissism, and even, on occasion, to further a noble goal. Presi-

dents also have burdens not felt by most of us—keeping the nation safe, for one. High-level statecraft requires a talent for telling divergent groups of people what they want to hear. This is not the best recipe for truth telling, particularly in times of war or national peril.

All lies, unlike all men, are not created equal. Philosophers from Aristotle to Niebuhr have made moral distinctions among falsehoods, whether "white lies" told for social convenience or to spare feelings, "excuses" that are only half true but that rationalize our own behavior, lies told during a crisis, lies told to liars, paternalistic lies told to protect those we care about, and lies told for the social good—also known as "noble lies." The presidential scholar Richard Norton Smith points out that Thomas Jefferson's own interpretation of the Constitution's limits on presidential power probably didn't allow for the Louisiana Purchase. Yet in office, having sworn to uphold that Constitution, Jefferson couldn't resist stretching the words and doubling America's size for a few million dollars. "And talk about a turnaround—it was Nixon who went to China," Smith added. "It's often the flip-flop, in pursuit of interests that transcend ideological consistency, that puts a president on Mount Rushmore."

Nor does the innocent social lie told by presidents—or on a president's behalf—usually get a president in trouble. Asked for President Reagan's reaction after winning a hard-



fought 1981 vote in Congress authorizing the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia, the White House aide Michael Deaver told reporters the president exclaimed, "Thank God!" What Reagan actually said, according to someone in the room, was, "I feel like I've just crapped a pineapple."

The first cousin of the white lie is the idle boast—not quite so harmless, but not nefarious, either. The unkindest way of looking at the bio-lie is to say that presidents (and presidential candidates) tend to be braggarts. More charitably, one could conclude that the job description seems to demand some fiddling with one's pedigree or accomplishments as a way to bond with voters—to tell them, in effect, "I'm one of you." In 1840, William Henry Harrison campaigned as a rustic born in a log cabin and indulged crowds with Indian war whoops at his rallies. In reality, the Whig nominee was the scion of an elite colonial family (his father was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a three-term governor of Virginia); a professional soldier, Harrison read the classics and enjoyed fine living.

That kind of personal embellishment was also at work when John F. Kennedy, courting the elites as well as the masses, told *Time* magazine's Hugh Sidey that he could read 1,200 words a minute (a figure JFK pulled out of the air); when Lyndon Johnson exclaimed to U.S. troops in Korea that his great-great-grandfather "died at the Alamo" (a great-great-uncle fought at San Jacinto, but wasn't killed); when Bill Clinton claimed he'd heard about the Iowa caucuses "since I was a little boy" (they didn't begin until he was in graduate school); and when Al Gore told a labor crowd that his mother used to lull him to sleep when he was a baby with "Look for the Union Label" (a ditty written in 1975, when Gore was twenty-seven years old). One bizarre whopper: Ronald Reagan told Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, in separate Oval Office visits, that as a young soldier in the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II, he had filmed the liberation of Nazi death camps; Reagan never served in Europe at all, though his work involved handling footage shot by military cameramen and war correspondents. Covering the White House for the past dozen years, I've become something of a connoisseur of the presidential boast. My favorite was when Clinton told *The Des Moines Register* editorial board that he was the only president who knew anything about agriculture before coming to office—skipping over actual farmers like Washington, Jefferson, Truman, and Jimmy Carter, as well as the Iowa farm boy Herbert Hoover.

George W. Bush does this sort of thing, too. During a January 2002 visit to West Virginia, the president kibitzed with Bob Kiss, the Democratic speaker of that state's legislature, over something they had in common: twins. "I've been to war," Bush said. "I've raised twins. If I had a choice, I'd rather go to war." It was a funny line, except that Bush *did* have a choice to serve in a war—in Vietnam—and didn't.

As candidates seek to woo voters with promises of good things to come, truth is often the first thing jettisoned on the campaign trail. This phenomenon is not new. In the closing days of the 1932 campaign, Franklin Roosevelt promised a crowd in Pittsburgh that he'd balance the federal budget while cutting "government operations" by 25 percent. Wisely, he attempted neither, but four years later as he prepared for another campaign trip to western Pennsylvania, he asked his speechwriter Sam Rosenman what he should say if his earlier vow came up. "Deny you were ever in Pittsburgh," Rosenman replied.

Rosenman's quip is still funny. One could, of course, huffily demand absolute fealty to the truth, but one could also live in the real world and find comforting reassurance that neither a president nor his wordsmiths believe all their own public relations. We still should make distinctions. Some falsehoods—like many campaign lies—are relatively harmless; they may soil an opponent's résumé or polish one's own, but their consequences are slight. Deceptions to promote or protect a policy or presidential action—call them governing lies—are more consequential, and it is by their consequences that they should be judged, as the American public harshly judged the lies told about the Vietnam War and about Watergate. Over the course of a tumultuous decade, those consequences included not just the ignominious end of an unpopular war and the fall of a president but a profound change in how much deceit the public—and the media—would tolerate from the Oval Office.

Even before those twin traumas came to a head, the American public's trust in its leaders had frayed. David Wise, a former White House correspondent turned investigative reporter, tapped into widespread public disgust in his catalog of presidential untruths, *The Politics of Lying*, published in 1973. "By 1972 the politics of lying had changed the politics of America," he wrote. "In place of trust, there was widespread mistrust; in place of confidence, there was disbelief and doubt in the system and its leaders." Still to come were Watergate and the release of White House tapes on which Lyndon Johnson blurts out to Robert McNamara that he knows that the reason used to justify the massive buildup of troops in Vietnam—the supposed attack on U.S. Navy ships by North Vietnamese patrol boats in the Gulf of Tonkin—was fiction. By 1975, the year Saigon fell, 69 percent of Americans answered affirmatively to a poll question asking whether "over the last ten years this country's leaders have consistently lied to the people."

That widespread erosion of trust also prompted Sissela Bok, the daughter of the famed Nobel laureates Gunnar and Alva Myrdal and a professor, at the time, of philosophy and lecturer at Harvard Medical School, to write *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*—a touchstone, since its 1978 publication, for those seeking to examine the morality

and the social costs of lying. Bok argued that while there are rare occasions when a lie may be justified, these falsehoods (which range from harmless social lies to extreme scenarios like telling a would-be murderer you don't know where to find an intended victim) had contributed to a general disregard for truth telling. Bok's book, which sprang out of her own research on the ethics of administering medical placebos, did not focus on lying politicians, though they pop up here and there. But her deep concern about the decline of trust, and her call for political, corporate, and educational institutions to take the lead in demanding and rewarding truthfulness, resonated with the public.

Presidential candidates, even those with reputations for evasiveness, reacted to the growing focus on honesty the way you might expect: they accused their opponents of lying, while promising not to lie themselves. Richard Nixon had been elected president in 1968 after positioning himself as the peace candidate. As the phrase *credibility gap* gained currency in the context of Johnson's lies about the Vietnam War, the incoming White House communications director, Herbert Klein, vowed, "Truth will become

Playboy that he "looked on a lot of women with lust," for example, or bemoaning a national "crisis of confidence") was a poor substitute in voters' minds for executive-branch competence, or for leadership that could make Americans feel good about themselves. As Western Illinois University history professor George Hopkins sees it, all presidents lie for the simple reason that if they didn't, we wouldn't elect them. "So the problem is not them, it's us," Hopkins told me recently. "We should look in the mirror."

Thus, Carter was involuntarily retired by Reagan, who berated Carter for distorting his record but had a tendency himself to stretch the truth if it made for a good yarn. Witness a favorite Reagan story about his role in a football game in high school in which, he claimed, players for a rival school, Mendota, complained to the referees that Reagan, playing for Dixon High, had committed a penalty that was not called. The refs supposedly asked him about it. "I told the truth," Reagan later said. "The penalty was ruled, and Dixon lost the game." My father, the Reagan biographer Lou Cannon, investigated this claim. He discovered that there were no contemporaneous accounts of

Even giving him the benefit of the doubt on honesty, one might ask: Why doesn't the nation's first-ever M.B.A. president demonstrate a better command of the facts?

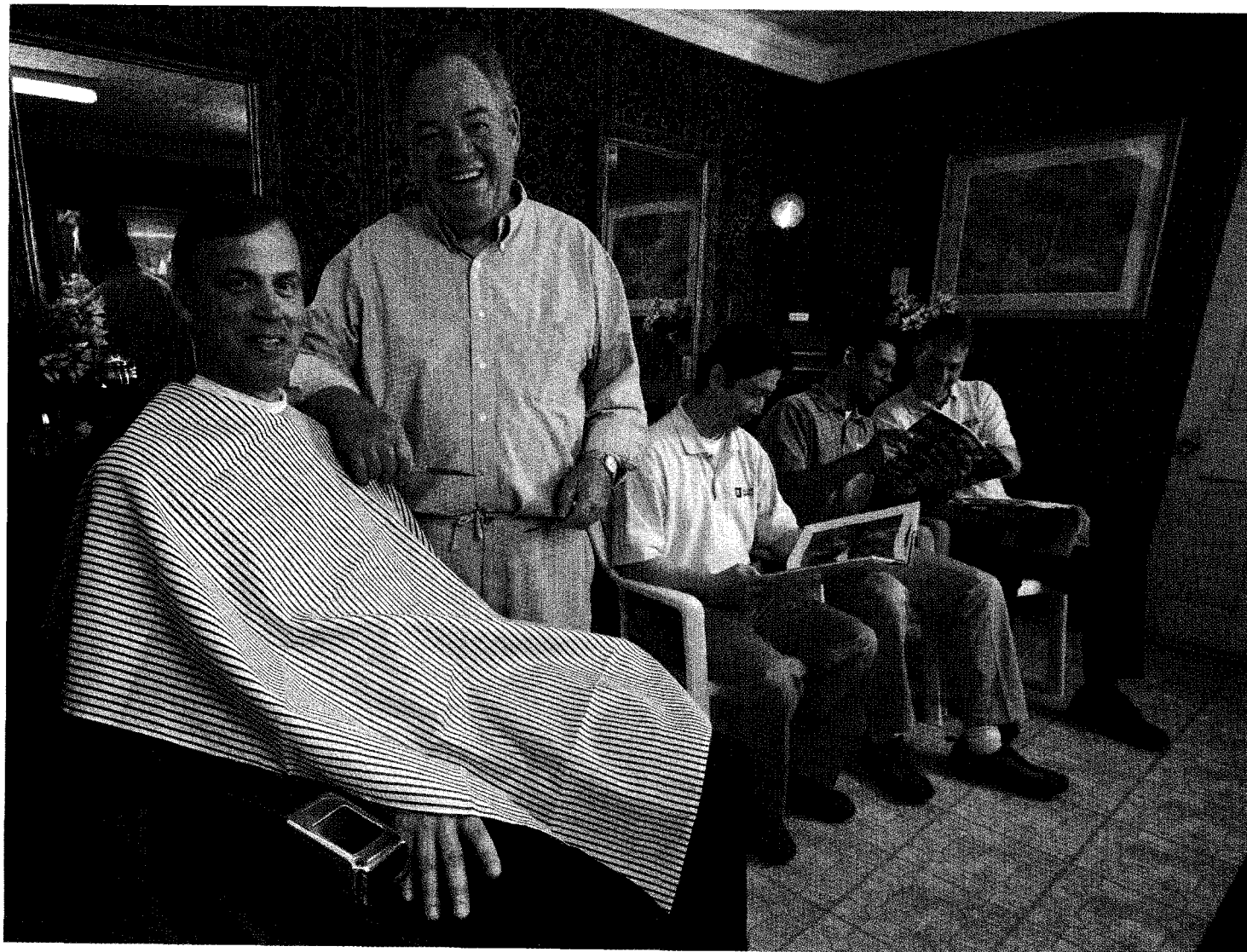
the hallmark of the Nixon administration." But by the time Nixon left the White House, a new catchphrase had entered the lexicon: *What did the president know, and when did he know it?* Upon being sworn in to succeed Nixon, Gerald Ford pronounced truth "the glue that holds government together." Jimmy Carter went Ford one better, in his unequivocal promise to the American people: "I will never tell a lie. I will never make a misleading statement. I will never betray the confidence any of you has in me."

By many measures, the Carter administration was more open, transparent, and truthful than many of its predecessors—and successors as well. But Carter's monastic vow of absolute truthfulness also generated its own blowback, most memorably Steven Brill's stinging piece "Jimmy Carter's Pathetic Lies." One example: "If you ever have any questions or advice for me," Carter told audiences, "just put Jimmy Carter, Plains, Georgia, on the envelope ... I open every letter myself, and read them all." This was an impossibility: the mail was forwarded, as it had to be, to Carter's campaign headquarters in Atlanta.

Such campaign exaggerations aside, Carter's commitment to truth telling did not wear well. "Humankind cannot bear very much reality," wrote T. S. Eliot, and after four years of Carter, the American electorate was no exception. Carter's revelatory form of communication (admitting to

any such incident, and that Dixon lost to Mendota only once when Reagan was a member of the varsity team—by a score of 24-0. "The ironic point here is that Reagan seems to have told the story to demonstrate how truthful he was," notes George Mason University political scientist James Pfiffner, who has studied presidential lying. "Yet he was telling an untruth to make the point."

More infamously, in November 1986, Reagan told the American people that his administration had not traded weapons "or anything else" to Iran in return for American hostages captured in Lebanon. Three weeks later, in a radio address, the president softened this to "Let me just say it was not my intent to do business with [Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini, to trade weapons for hostages." Three months after that, in an Oval Office address, Reagan confessed: "A few months ago I told the American people I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that's true, but the facts and evidence tell me it is not." Reagan's presidency was winding down, but the not-yet-begun presidency of George H. W. Bush was already marred by his insistence that he was "out of the loop" on the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostages scandal. Special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh spent all four years of the first Bush presidency examining that alibi. Concluding that it was bogus, Walsh released documents three days before the 1992



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Henry A. Besanceney

Henry Besanceney

Only



election showing that Bush had attended crucial Iran-Contra meetings and approved the plan.

Bill Clinton's mendacity as president—or, depending on your politics, independent counsel Kenneth Starr's perjury trap—was the backdrop for the campaign in 2000 to find a new president. Once again, the public was looking for a relatively honest politician. As Sissela Bok wrote in the preface to an updated edition of *Lying*, released in 1999, "No matter how our own period comes to be judged ... what is already certain is that we are all on the receiving end of a great many more lies than in the past." John McCain dubbed his campaign bus the "Straight Talk Express" and ended rallies by proclaiming that, as president, he would "tell the American people the truth—even if it's bad news." In the general election, George W. Bush stressed this theme, too. In his third debate with Al Gore, Bush said the country needed "somebody in office who will tell the truth." This was not a casual observation; it was a premeditated talking point for the Bush-Cheney campaign that night—and for the rest of the month of October.

By then, the story line of that campaign was framed as Al Gore's Bill Clinton-style exaggerations versus George W. Bush's Dan Quayle-style bloopers. Afterward, Bush assumed office with a reputation as a truth teller, even among Americans who didn't support his policies—or didn't think he was all that bright. Two months before 9/11, in an Opinion Dynamics poll, 69 percent of Americans—21 percent more than had voted for him—responded that they found Bush, who had campaigned on conservative themes, to be "honest and trustworthy." Only 20 percent of respondents disagreed with that sentiment.

How did Bush go in the public eye from truth teller to prevaricator in chief? He has now been pilloried, after all, not just by outspoken liberals—in books like David Corn's *The Lies of George W. Bush* and Al Franken's *Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them*, in documentaries like Eugene Jarecki's *Why We Fight* and Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, and on countless Web sites—but also by an increasingly hostile mainstream media, including top national newspapers, *The New Yorker*, and this magazine, as well as high-profile books on the Iraq War like Thomas E. Ricks's *Fiasco*, Peter W. Galbraith's *The End of Iraq*, and *State of Denial*, the third volume in Bob Woodward's trilogy about this administration.

The critique that Bush isn't honest with the American people confounds many of those who have worked most closely with him. That includes two aides whose opinions and integrity I greatly respect: Michael J. Gerson, Bush's former chief speechwriter, who describes the president as a "compulsive truth teller," a man so guileless that he can't hide his boredom when making speeches he doesn't want to give; and Peter Wehner, director of the White House Office of Strategic Initiatives, who argues that the notion Bush

"lied" about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is absurd on its face—and that those accusing Bush of dishonesty are the ones deeply mistaken.

Yet Bush has gradually built a record of partial truths, half-truths, and untruths. Several cases in point:

- In his 2006 State of the Union address, Bush cited Iraq and Afghanistan as examples of "the great story of our time"—the advance of freedom. He proclaimed that the number of democracies in the world had increased from about two dozen at the end of 1945 to 122 today, but he didn't mention that neither Iraq nor Afghanistan was counted as such by the organization whose statistics he was touting.

- The president also asserted, accurately, that the U.S. economy had gained 4.6 million new jobs in the previous two and a half years, but he failed to note that it had lost 2.6 million jobs in his first two and a half years.

- In March 2003, Bush insisted that it was "a matter of fact" that the coalition he cobbled together for the invasion of Iraq included more nations than the alliance assembled by his father in 1991. In *Fiasco*, Ricks deconstructs this argument by pointing out that most of George W. Bush's partnering nations (with the notable exception of the British) were a reluctant bunch. The Poles fought, but resented being there. The Italians wouldn't get out of their vehicles on patrols. The Japanese wouldn't patrol at all and, in fact, wouldn't even guard their own perimeters—Dutch troops did it for them.

- In June 2004, when asked about Ahmad Chalabi, the Iraqi exile who'd done so much to encourage the U.S. invasion of Iraq, but who had fallen out of favor with U.S. military leaders, Bush acted as if he barely knew the man's name. "Chalabi? My meetings with him were very brief," Bush said. "I think I met with him at the State of the Union and just kind of working through the rope line, and he might have come with a group of leaders. But I haven't had any extensive conversations with him." Perhaps. But Chalabi wasn't confined behind a rope line at the 2004 State of the Union address. He was listed by the White House as a "special guest" of first lady Laura Bush and seated directly behind her.

- After the Democrats' victories in the 2006 midterm elections, the president allowed that "Democrats are going to support our troops just like Republicans will" and that the Democratic congressional leaders Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid "care about the security of this country, like I do." Those gracious statements were at odds with his campaign rhetoric from just days before, when he had said, regarding Iraq, that if the Democrats' vision were to prevail, "the terrorists win and America loses." On November 8 at the White House, Bush suggested that it was the campaign talk that was disingenuous. But maybe it was the other way around—that Bush meant what he said in Texas, and was only being politic in the East Room.



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■ At the same press conference, Bush essentially admitted he'd lied to three White House correspondents who had asked him in an Oval Office interview the week before whether Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was staying on. The president had assured the three reporters that Rumsfeld was remaining. Now, standing in the East Room, Bush was revealing the details of a different reality: he'd decided before the election to sack his Pentagon chief, and when asked the question, he was already focused on Rumsfeld's likely replacement. Bush provided dueling explanations: First, he maintained that he didn't "want to inject a major decision about this war" into the waning days of a campaign. Then he immediately added the more Clintonesque explanation that his answer hadn't really been dishonest, because he hadn't yet had his "final" conversation with Rumsfeld, and hadn't interviewed Robert Gates in person.

Presidents have rarely told the full truth in the midst of major military operations, and until Vietnam, Americans tended to cut them slack for the sake of the troops, if nothing else. During World War II, for example, the government launched an elaborate disinformation campaign to mask the details of D-Day—an episode that Sissela Bok

cites (as a prime example of a lie commonly thought justifiable and one that was the precise context of Churchill's line to Stalin about protecting truth with a bodyguard of lies). Similar fabrications would fall under Bok's definition of "paternalistic lies." The everyday version would be a parent falsely reassuring a child that Mommy and Daddy are not fighting. Another presidential equivalent would be falsely reassuring the citizenry on issues of national security for their own protection. On December 9, 1941, two days after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt told Americans in a radio address that they were now in the war "all the way," while promising to share "together the bad news and good news." But FDR couldn't quite bring himself to reveal the extent of the losses in Hawaii, saying that he lacked "sufficient information," which was not exactly true.

Serious commentators on American public life have seldom questioned a president's right to lie in such circumstances. But they are starting to. Consider the media hand-wringing triggered by President Bush's surprise trip to Iraq in November 2003, when he and his aides lied about his Thanksgiving plans in an effort to preserve his safety and that of the troops he was to visit. As with the Vietnam War, the course of events in Iraq is prompting a reevaluation of truth telling for its own sake.

In *When Presidents Lie*, the liberal political journalist Eric Alterman attempts to raise the bar on when a commander in chief can dissemble. He argues that although wartime may be when presidents can get away with lying—and is perhaps even when they most feel the need to lie—recent American history suggests that it is also when the costs of a lie may be too high.

Alterman's thesis is that the lies told by Roosevelt during World War II, specifically those concerning the promises he made to Stalin at Yalta, helped set in motion the Cold War, and that unrealistic expectations in the West about the future of Eastern Europe fueled Soviet suspicions of America's motives. These suspicions, he argues, were stoked by Dwight Eisenhower's public denials about Francis Gary Powers's disastrous U-2 spy flight over the Soviet Union. The accompanying loss of U.S. credibility helped foment the Cuban missile crisis. In turn, the fiction that John F. Kennedy and his team of White House hagiographers spread about

THE WAVE-MAKER

Pawleys Island

There was intricate machinery involved & a powerful desire
to make it all move. It had been easy then to stand waist-deep
in the waves & will the world into existence, sea, sky, & cloud,
the ever-changing elements, moving and robed, like characters
on a stage delivering their lines. Or so she had thought at the time.

That was some years ago. She is older now & occasionally returns
to inspect the charming, antique machinery, all flywheels & cogs,
surprised that it still works. And notices that on a day like today
the waves are a colorless color that no word exists for.
She will have to do something about that, she thinks, before memory fails her.

Down on her knees, she lets the old familiar rollers wash her clean,
& sighing, takes in all the changes since she has last been.
Salt stings her eyes. As if on wires, a gull stalls in the day's crosswinds.
Down the beach, a girl, small as the dot on an *i*, is waving & waving,
but the wind takes her words, the waves drown out whatever it is she is saying.

—ELIZABETH SPIRES

Elizabeth Spires is the author of five collections of poetry, including *Worldling* (1995) and *Now the Green Blade Rises* (2002). She teaches at Goucher College.

an uncompromising U.S. stance in October 1962 helped beget Vietnam: ever watchful of his political rival Robert Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson felt compelled to embrace the myth of a hard-line response to Communist adventure—never mind the truth that JFK had traded some NATO missiles in Turkey for Nikita Khrushchev's missiles in Cuba.

Alterman is considered an ideological man, which I am not, but I believe his revisionist argument is worth taking seriously. I say this not only because Alterman had the intellectual honesty to confront the record of liberal Democrats as well as conservative Republicans who have served as wartime commanders in chief, but also because the war in Iraq has shown the peril of taking a president's assertions at face value—even if that president believes he is telling the truth. But don't take it from me. Take it from Dwight Eisenhower. After he left office, Ike described the lies his administration had told about the U-2 incident as one of the biggest regrets of his presidency. "I didn't realize how high a price we were going to have to pay for that lie," Eisenhower told David Kraslow of Knight Newspapers. "And if I had to do it all over again, we would have kept our mouths shut."

But presidents have trouble resisting the short-term gain a lie can afford them. It was a Kennedy administration official who claimed the government's "right ... to lie" to the public. He did so in the context of the Cuban missile crisis, which began with a little lie about Kennedy's health—press secretary Pierre Salinger announced that the president's trip to Chicago was being cut short because JFK had a cold. Salinger apparently never understood why anyone would question the cover story concocted to get Kennedy back to Washington in October 1962—just as Scott McClellan was taken aback by questions about the White House's deceptive statements on Bush's Thanksgiving trip to Iraq. "The trip certainly, I'm sure, gave a morale boost to the troops," David Wise told a wire-service reporter who asked his opinion. "The question is, should the government engage in lying in order to essentially ... protect a photo op? The answer is, no it shouldn't. It's a serious business when government lies, and eventually it does hurt a government and a president's credibility."

Wise was prescient when he took on presidential honesty in the 1970s, but his expectations are probably too pure. I was president of the White House Correspondents' Association when Bush and his aides dissembled about the president's Thanksgiving plans and took only a small White House press pool to Iraq. I registered no protest upon their return. The security pressures must have been extreme, I reasoned. After all, Bush neglected to tell his own parents about the trip, although they were trekking to Crawford, Texas, for the holiday dinner. On the other hand, if going to Iraq was meant to be an evocative symbol, perhaps the ease with which the White House gave everyone the slip was emblematic as well.

It has been said about several recent U.S. presidents that they seem to believe what they are saying, even if what they are saying is not true. This explanation is offered as exculpation, as if presidents are Method actors who deserve credit for their "character motivation." Something like admiration was present in Bob Kerrey's description of Bill Clinton as "an unusually good liar."

Franklin Roosevelt practiced plausible deniability about his own declining health by ignoring his doctors. That's a profound kind of denial. Ronald Reagan was trained as a dramatic actor in a medium where shortcuts are taken with facts in order, supposedly, to get at a larger truth. Reagan's methods were internalized by aides who never set foot on a studio lot. In his memoir *A Different Drummer: My Thirty Years With Ronald Reagan*, Mike Deaver claims that he never once heard Reagan tell a lie, and that he believes it would have been "impossible" for Reagan to do so. "Throughout the entire Iran Contra affair, Reagan believed what he did was right," Deaver wrote, "and that he was telling the truth to the American people."

George W. Bush's aides say similar things about him. Perhaps surprisingly, some of Bush's harshest critics do as well. David Corn, author of *The Lies of George W. Bush*, is a longtime acquaintance of mine, and I asked him to consider the following premises:

- a) That Bush considers himself a truth teller.
- b) That although statements made by Bush as president have proven to be untrue, Bush generally believed they were true when he made them.
- c) That even when Bush's words have been at odds with the facts, you could hook him up to a polygraph machine; he'd still tell you he was telling the truth—and he'd pass.

To me, Corn's book reads like an anti-Bush polemic, especially when it calls the president's veracity into question over issues that seem more about Bush's conservative governance. (Appointing John Ashcroft attorney general, for instance, made a "lie" of Bush's inaugural call for civility and national unity—under the theory that Ashcroft's archconservatism undermined any chance of détente with the Democrats.) Corn is scrupulous about the facts, however, and except for offering the caveat that Bush, like other politicians, has "stretched the truth" to help sell key policies of his presidency, Corn didn't much quarrel with the three postulates.

"So your question is, is it still lying anyway?" Corn said. "What Bush does is that he displays a kind of willful disregard for the truth, which is the moral equivalent of lying. He doesn't do any due diligence with the facts. Even if you believed something was true [at] the time you said it, it becomes a lie when you don't act on new information—or correct yourself when you've been proven wrong."

Whatever the president's original sincerity about his reasons for invading Iraq, he has never to this day really acknowledged his rhetorical excess. Two nights before launching the invasion, he gave this rationale: "Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised." In his January 28, 2003, State of the Union address, Bush had told the nation that U.S. intelligence agencies estimated that Saddam Hussein possessed more than 30,000 munitions capable of being armed with chemical agents, and that inspectors had turned up only sixteen of them. In May, two months into the invasion, Bush proclaimed simply: "We have found the weapons of mass destruction."

What the U.S. Army has unearthed in Iraq in three years are 500 rockets and artillery shells armed with mustard gas or the sarin nerve agent, some of them in degraded condition, buried in scattered bunkers around the country. The Army has found no evidence of an up-and-running Iraqi nuclear-weapons program. In *State of Denial*, Woodward quotes a December 11, 2003, recorded exchange between him and Bush in which it took the president five minutes and eighteen seconds to acknowledge the failure to find weapons of mass destruction.

Confronted later with their statements, Bush and other top officials in his government tend simply to reiterate them. Other times, they've simply denied making these statements, even though they are on film. For instance, when Bush was asked in May 2002 about the hunt for Osama bin Laden, he replied: "I don't know where he is. I repeat what I said. I truly am not that concerned about him." Yet on October 13, 2004, during Bush's third and final debate with John Kerry, the following exchange took place:

KERRY: "Six months after he said Osama bin Laden must be caught dead or alive, this president was asked, 'Where is Osama bin Laden?' He said, 'I don't know. I don't really think about him very much. I'm not that concerned.'"

BUSH: "Gosh, I just don't think I ever said I'm not worried about Osama bin Laden. It's kind of one of those exaggerations."

In an ABC interview two weeks before the 2006 midterms, George Stephanopoulos asked Bush where the compromise might be on Iraq between the dueling political buzz phrases *stay the course* and *cut and run*. Bush's response: "Well, hey, listen, we've never been 'stay the course,' George ..." Liberal bloggers quickly posted on YouTube a hilarious montage of Bush using that exact phrase repeatedly. "The president of the United States is not a fact-checker," White House communications director Dan Bartlett blurted out at a July 18, 2003, briefing about what the president knew, and when he knew it, regarding British

intelligence reports of Saddam Hussein's agents prowling around Africa in search of enriched uranium.

No one expects him to be. What they do expect is that a president who takes the nation to war knows what he's talking about when he enumerates the reasons for that war. Which raises the central question about George W. Bush's tenure in the White House: Even giving him the benefit of the doubt on honesty, why doesn't the nation's first-ever M.B.A. president demonstrate a better command of the facts?

There are three popular theories about Bush's behavior: that the president is an intellectually incurious man who doesn't have or want enough information to make informed decisions; that his late-life embrace of religion has given him inner peace, but also a near-absolute level of certitude; and that his demand for total loyalty discourages the give-and-take a leader needs, because aides who proffer advice or information that doesn't jibe with administration policy are not viewed as team players.

Several White House aides, past and present, say it's simply wrong to suggest that people around Bush are afraid to bring him bad news or contrary opinions. "I was never intimidated," Michael Gerson told me. Former press secretary Ari Fleischer said the same thing. On July 2, 2003, when Bush made his infamous "Bring 'em on" taunt, Fleischer told the president pointedly as they walked out of the Roosevelt Room that this statement would offend a military mom with a child serving in Iraq. "I always found it easy to raise objections like that," Fleischer said. "Easy as a layup."

Yet Bush has somehow managed to be consistently surprised by events in the war of his own making. In the absence of any plausible explanation from his loyalists, it is his critics who are writing the history of this period. One consistent theme of these critics is that faith trumps fact for Bush when it comes to Iraq. There's ample supporting evidence for that belief, starting with Bush's bio-fib to Brit Hume in 2003 that he didn't read newspapers. Hume was rightly incredulous, and Laura Bush later refuted her husband in an exchange with Jay Leno. Yet in telling this particular lie, Bush may have been revealing an important truth about himself. What he was getting at, apparently, is that he doesn't read columns and editorials. The reason, he told me and other journalists, was his need to "stay optimistic."

There can be a thin line between optimism and delusion. During his 2004 reelection campaign, Bush went to a Boeing aerospace plant in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania, to put in a plug for the nation's fledgling missile-defense system, and asserted, "We say to those tyrants who believe they can blackmail America and the free world, 'You fire, we're going to shoot it down.'" Given the current technology, Bush's statement was a declaration of wishful thinking, not military reality. Bush had made an equally dubious assertion

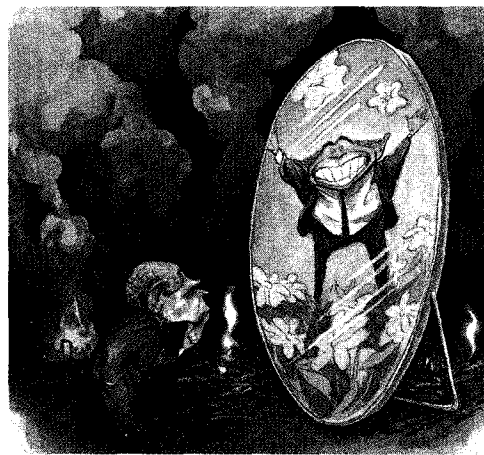
while running in 2000, after several highly publicized exonerations of men on death row had prompted nationwide soul-searching over capital punishment. "Everybody who's been executed [in Texas] is guilty of the crime of which they've been convicted," Bush said. He may have believed this, but in Austin, Bush presided over more executions than any other governor in modern history, and did so in a state that offers only rudimentary legal services for indigent defendants, enforces strict time limits for post-conviction appeals, and does little in the way of executive-branch or parole-board review of trial-court verdicts. Really, Bush had no way of knowing that what he *hoped* was true actually *was* true—and there were empirical reasons to wonder. This example has a recent echo in Bush's confident-sounding assurance in a September 6, 2006, East Room speech: "We have in place a rigorous process to ensure those held at Guantánamo Bay belong at Guantánamo."

This kind of blasé optimism has undergirded Bush's entire policy on Iraq, and its consequences have been grim. As Peter W. Galbraith, author of a new book critical of Bush's prosecution of the war, put it: "With regard to Iraq, President Bush and his top advisers have consistently substituted wishful thinking for analysis and hope for strategy." In May 2003, under that now-infamous MISSION ACCOMPLISHED banner aboard the U.S.S. *Lincoln*, Bush proclaimed, "Iraq is free" and "major combat operations in Iraq have ended." But almost four years later, scores of Iraqis are still dying every day, the country is in the throes of civil war, and American forces remain enmeshed in a conflict with no clear end. "The strategy was denial," wrote Woodward in the last paragraph of *State of Denial*. "With all Bush's upbeat talk and optimism, he had not told the American public the truth about what Iraq had become."

Bush's aides bristle at such words, but when asked why the president refuses to go back and correct his rhetorical mistakes—to level with the American people about where and why he was wrong—they falter or fall back on platitudes. Queried about Bush's failure to cite what he had ever done wrong, Fleischer answers: "It's the foolish politician who looks backwards and wallows in his difficulties. A good politician looks forward. It's the difference between a pessimist and an optimist, between a loser and a winner, between Jimmy Carter and George W. Bush." In his 2006 State of the Union address, the president voiced the same sentiment in addressing his Iraq War critics: "Hindsight alone is not wisdom," he said, "and second-guessing is not a strategy."

But optimism, while more appealing than its opposite number, is not a strategy, any more than hindsight. And it has the added drawback of not offering any Plan B. Regarding the failure to find weapons of mass destruction, Gerson said that the White House staff itself was never told what went wrong. "As opposed to being deceptive, when those weapons were not found I think people were shocked," he said. "I mean, it was beyond belief."

Now that the midterm elections are over, some speculate that the administration will be more candid and less dogmatic about Iraq. Yet some results of this administration's self-deception are not reversible. While researching *Fiasco*, Thomas Ricks spoke to numerous battlefield



commanders in Iraq who left thousands of tons of conventional weapons undisturbed as they raced toward Baghdad in the first heady days of the invasion. They didn't have enough troops to guard these caches of weapons, and they didn't dare destroy them, believing as they did that underneath might lie highly dangerous stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. "So the bunkers were often bypassed and left undisturbed by an invasion force that was

already stretched thin," Ricks wrote. "And the insurgents were able to arm themselves at leisure."

Of course, posterity rewards success, not truth. If D-Day had failed, FDR likely would have been remembered not as a heroic wartime president but as a tragic figure whose self-serving deceptions about his own health prolonged a savage war and jeopardized victory. And if Japan had not surrendered even after atomic bombs were dropped on the civilian populations of two of its cities, Truman might be recalled as a butcher. Conversely, if U.S. forces had found the fabled weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, would Bush's integrity be under question? Probably not. For presidents, consequences matter more than truth. Bush almost certainly understands this; it may inform his oft-expressed hope of being judged positively in the long sweep of history. Yet today he remains reluctant to reckon not only with his statements but also with their results. President Kennedy may have lied to the public about why the Russians removed their missiles from Cuba, but he knew the truth of the situation well enough to negotiate the compromise that led to their removal. Bush, on the other hand, seems unwilling to recognize that the reality of the situation in Iraq does not conform to his vision of it. The most dangerous lies a president can tell, it would seem, are the lies he tells himself. ■

Carl M. Cannon is White House correspondent for *National Journal*.

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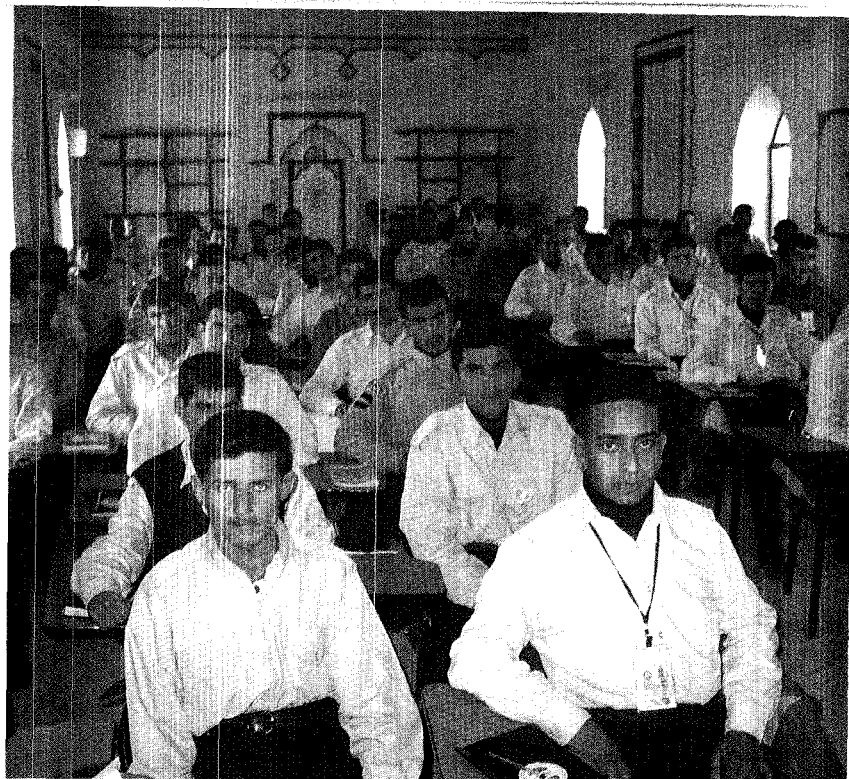


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Whether we ultimately stay or go, we need to contain the burgeoning forces of chaos now—and that requires fixing Iraq's policing problems. An expert explains how.

BY BING WEST



IRAQI POLICE RECRUITS in a camp outside Ramadi

Streetwise

On a hot day last fall, I climbed into a Humvee with a handful of marines at a combat outpost on the outskirts of Haditha, 140 miles northwest of Baghdad. We were due to meet the local police chief, after a swing through the market by the river. "We get hit there every day," Captain Matt Tracy, the company commander, told me. "So we go there every day."

We drove past storefronts whose owners hastily pulled down steel shutters as we passed by. The street hadn't fully emptied of shoppers before the first shots cracked from the rear. With no room to turn, we drove on. A few seconds later, someone shot at us from a palm grove to our right. Captain Tracy and his men jumped out of the Humvee and rushed off in pursuit, darting from tree to tree to avoid snipers. Half an hour later they returned, dripping sweat. As usual, the shooters had escaped.

Back at the combat outpost, Tracy offered me a warm Coke. "Sorry we have no cold drinks," he said. "We had two freezers, but a prisoner died two nights ago under Iraqi police interrogation. So we shipped the body in our freezer to the States for autopsy and investigation. Then yesterday we shot a guy running a checkpoint. We put him in the other freezer until Battalion sends down an investigator. I'll use Clorox when we get our freezers back. Right now

I have to deal with an angry police chief. We've been asking him how his prisoner died, and he doesn't like it."

Tracy walked outside and escorted the compact and unsmiling police chief, Colonel Farouq, into his office.

"Every American is asking how one terrorist died," he said angrily. "We questioned him, and he died. That's all I say. He betrayed my police. [My police officers'] heads were tossed in the dirt in Baiji. And all you ask is how a terrorist died."

"We go by the law," Tracy said. "We have rules we follow."

"Rules? What about nine bodies without heads? What about my brother's body?" Farouq raged. "My mother complains I have lost the family because I help Americans." Farouq's younger brother had been killed in the ambush, his body mutilated.

"Baiji's a hundred kilometers from here," the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel James Donnellan, said.

BING WEST

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"I'll take a force there. You can come with me."

"When?" Farouq demanded to know.

"Higher has to coordinate," Donnellan said. "Two or three days."

"The bodies will be gone by then. You investigate a dead terrorist right away. But my brother has to wait," Farouq said. "Your rules? You won't see strong Iraqi police the American way for a hundred years."

A hundred years would seem a harsh judgment, were it not for our performance in Iraq to date. In the fourth year of war, America teeters on the verge of defeat. By the fourth year of World War II, victory gleamed on the horizon. The Korean War was over inside four years. Even in Vietnam, the Viet Cong had been decimated by the fourth year, and the conflict had morphed from guerrilla warfare into a conventional slugfest against the North.

We are all too familiar with the strategic blunders that have characterized our engagement in Iraq. Still, some 500,000 American and Iraqi military and police personnel are confronting roughly 25,000 Sunni insurgents and Shia militiamen—a twenty-to-one edge that should give us a clear advantage. In terms of spending, the disparity is even greater: \$320 billion versus less than \$200 million. Yet despite being exponentially outnumbered and outspent, the forces of murder and chaos seem to be winning.

Is it too late to reverse this trend? Maybe not—if we make major tactical adjustments soon. In exploring this question, I made two extended visits to Iraq last summer and fall, during which I accompanied ten American and eight Iraqi battalions on operations. I concentrated on Baghdad and Anbar province, the heart of the insurgency, and I talked to everyone I could—from soldiers on the front line to Iraqi politicians and American military leaders at the highest levels, including Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki and General George Casey Jr., our top commander there.

Here's one thing just about everyone told me: Iraq is not a military battlefield; it is a series of intense police actions, centered in Baghdad and a dozen key cities to the west and north, where Sunni insurgents and Shia militiamen, both sides dressed as civilians, control the streets. American and Iraqi soldiers have no idea who their enemies are. And in the rare instances when insurgents are actually captured, American rules and a corrupt Iraqi judicial system have converged to ensure that most are released.

A year ago, the abiding policy question was, How can the United States leave Iraq when there is no functioning army in place to keep the peace? The future of Iraq depends no less today than it did a year ago on a viable Iraqi security force. But the issue may be less a military one—in the conventional sense of clashing armies—than a policing one. If the insurgents are to be defeated, it will have to be by local tough guys in town after town, as

happened in the American West in the 1870s. These guys will likely be more ruthless than we would like. But if we don't let them establish some control—and give them help in maintaining it—any strategies for phased withdrawals or grand political bargains or international constabularies will be irrelevant. To achieve some sort of stability, we must change the way we work with the Iraqi military and police at the local level.

In combating an insurgency, the police are a crucial force. After Baghdad fell in 2003, Ambassador Paul Bremer, the president's emissary to Iraq, tried ineffectually to turn sad-sack local cops into the primary force for establishing order. In 2004 and 2005, the insurgents, led by al-Qaeda extremists, carried out ruthless attacks that drove those police forces, poorly led and haphazardly trained, to the sidelines. Torture, mass executions, and public beheadings were common. Throughout the Sunni Triangle, the police hid in their stations and refused to get involved, casting a blind eye to the insurgents burrowed in like ticks among the population. Police forces in major Sunni cities like Fallujah and Ramadi made as few as ten arrests a month. "No police chief in the U.S. could keep his job with such performance," Ralph Morten, a senior detective in the Los Angeles Police Department on his sixth visit to Iraq, told me.

But the police are reticent for good reason: they are deathly afraid of the insurgents, who threaten to kill them and their families for cooperating with the Americans or the Maliki government. Not long ago in Fallujah, the deputy police chief was executed. When the police arrested two men for the murder, a local judge hurriedly dismissed the charges. Half the police force walked off the job in protest, explaining to American troops that this was why they didn't make arrests. Colonel Larry Nicholson, the top marine in Fallujah, says he understands why the police weren't making more arrests. "First, they have to stay alive," he told me. "The new chief has told his men to live in the barracks and have their families live out of town. You can't be a decent cop in this city and expect to go home at night."

Meanwhile, according to U.S. military sources, the Iraqi Interior Ministry permitted Shia militias to infiltrate the police throughout Baghdad and southern Iraq, and then let criminals and Shia death squads operate with impunity—and in some cases actively cooperated with them. (Prime Minister Maliki, himself a Shiite, told me that Bremer had caused the police failure by recruiting "bad elements" and providing poor training.)

As a result, the police in Baghdad are among the most wretched in the world. New York City cops send some 26,000 criminals to prison every year; in Baghdad, with twenty times the murder rate, that number is at best 2,000. (New York City's population is 8 million; Baghdad's is about 6 million.) During the month I spent

in Iraq in the fall, U.S. forces in Baghdad killed 110 Iraqis and detained about 1,100. Lieutenant Colonel Brian Winski, whose battalion guards the southern approach to the city, told me that he knew of police chiefs who had been relieved of duty by the Maliki government for cracking down on militia members.

In the Sunni district of Doura, in southern Baghdad, I found row upon row of middle-class houses with Humvees parked at the end of every other street. "Our presence has cut down the murders," Colonel Michael Beech told me with evident pride. "We can't do it for them forever, though. The question is whether the Iraqi politicians want their own police to succeed."

Beech had deployed one American company (140 men) and an Iraqi police company for every two city blocks throughout Doura, an area comprising roughly 1,300 houses and 17,000 people. At that rate, it would take a force of about 100,000 to control the entire city. At the time of my visit, there were only 14,000 Americans and 40,000 Iraqi police in Baghdad.

In the United States, a cop who pulls you over calls up your record and finds out where and when you were last stopped, and what the charge was. The Chicago police carry a device that takes fingerprints and transmits them over the radio, with the results of a database search received in minutes.

In Iraq, the police have no detective equipment; no reliable identification system has been widely fielded. As a result, American soldiers on patrol futilely call in the phonetic spelling of Iraqi names on whatever ID card they are handed. (Between 1966 and 1968, by contrast, the South Vietnamese government implemented a labor-intensive census program to register every military-age male in every hamlet.) A few enterprising American rifle companies have conducted their own independent censuses, employing rudimentary spreadsheets and personal digital cameras. But no central information system exists.

This is the greatest technical failure of the war. For all of our efforts, we have ignored one of the most fundamental axioms of counterinsurgency warfare: an insurgency cannot be defeated if the enemy cannot be identified.

Nor can it be defeated if those enemies who are successfully identified cannot be effectively imprisoned. Last May in south Baghdad, an American battalion proudly showed me photos of six Shiites captured with blood on their hands, weapons and shell casings in their car, and a dead Sunni a few blocks away. In September, a judge released all six.

Iraqi police do not make arrests that stick. More than 80 percent of the Sunni insurgents and Shia militiamen detained by American and Iraqi forces are set free. In Falujah, Major Vaughn Ward's men detained 120 suspects between March and September. Twenty-four were sent

to prison. The rest walked free because judges deemed the evidence against them insufficient. (Prime Minister Maliki compounded matters when, in an effort to pave the way toward political negotiations over the summer, he released thousands of prisoners from jails in Baghdad.)

Some senior American officers told me that the rearrest rate of released prisoners was only 6 percent, compared with a recidivism rate of 65 percent in the United States. So either the Iraqi insurgents were ten times as likely as American ex-convicts to see the error of their ways, or they found it all too easy to evade justice.

American troops mockingly refer to arrests of insurgents as "catch and release." Some Iraqi police are similarly frustrated. Colonel Sheban is a tough police chief in the restive town of Baghdadi on the upper Euphrates. He lost one brother to the insurgents a month before I met him, and a second brother a few days after I left. His message to me was simple: "I got Jamil Daham. He killed an American. Insurgents go to jail for six, seven months and start again. I want American people to know they should stay in jail. I can recognize bad guys."

Acting on instinct, Sheban had indeed arrested an insurgent who later was linked to the killing of an American. Of course, to authorize an arrest based on instinct or suspicion is to invite abuse. Yet to insist upon strict evidentiary rules in the midst of a civil war and under a government racked with corruption is to guarantee failure. "Too many Iraqi judges let the terrorists go free," General Casey told me. Major General M. Roger Peterson, the American in charge of police training, agreed. "We're not imprisoning the way the situation demands," he said.

Meticulous review procedures introduced after Abu Ghraib have proved favorable to the insurgents. Any Iraqi detained is brought to an American lawyer at the battalion level; two American soldiers have to fill out sworn arrest affidavits; physical evidence is bagged, and pictures of the "crime" scene are taken. The battalion then has eighteen hours to decide whether the evidence is sufficient to send the detainee to the brigade level. The brigade can hold the detainee for up to eighteen days, at which point it must release him or send him on to a detention facility where a committee reviews the evidence for the third time. If all of these hurdles are passed, the detainee is kept in jail until an Iraqi judge hears the case (giving it a fourth review).

The U.S. Constitution provides for the suspension of habeas corpus in the event of rebellion. During the Civil War, President Lincoln decreed that the police and the Army did not have to show a judge evidence on which they had imprisoned someone. In subsequent wars, prisoners of war and captured guerrillas alike have been held until the cessation of hostilities.

In Iraq, the Americans' insistence upon strict rules of evidence in the midst of a shooting war has given significant advantages to the insurgents. By posing as civilians, they

make themselves hard to identify among the populace. If captured, they are guaranteed civil rights that make detaining them all but impossible, whereas enemy soldiers in uniform would simply be held until hostilities ceased. In Baghdad, every 100 police make eight arrests a year that result in prison time. In New York City, every 100 police make 120 such arrests. If seventy civilians were being murdered each day in Manhattan, New Yorkers would be unlikely to call for *stricter* rules of evidence than those currently in place.

When U.S. military manpower and technology work hand in hand with local Iraqi police, the combination can be effective. I have seen several successful joint efforts.

Every day, aerial cameras hover over Anbar; some are mounted on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and others on helicopters; some are infrared, others stream down video in sharp, brilliant colors. I was in a company operations center in Haditha when Captain Bert Lewis, the air officer, pointed at a screen showing a video feed.

“Your rules?” the police chief said. “You won’t see strong Iraqi police the American way for a hundred years.”

“Check that dude next to the white Nissan,” he said, speaking into a handset.

An operator several miles away zoomed in the UAV camera. On the screen, we watched a man in a white dish-dasha hastily scooping dirt over a boxy package, while cars passed by without slowing down.

“FedEx delivery,” Lewis said, to general laughter. “I don’t believe this dude.” The Nissan drove away as the man finished packing dirt around the improvised explosive device, or IED.

“Follow the car or the man-dress?” Lewis asked.

“Nail that sucker,” Lieutenant Joshua Booth said. (Booth was shot and killed the following week, leading his platoon down a city street.)

The man looked up and down the street, and then ran south. The picture tilted, then zoomed in, holding him in the center of the frame. A series of black numbers scrolled along the right edge, updating the GPS coordinates. The target, solidly built and in his mid-thirties, had left the road and was now running along the riverbank.

At this point, a half-dozen marines had clustered around the screen to watch. The man was running hard, back rigid, chest out. “Look, he’s doubling back.” He kept looking over his shoulder to see if he was being followed. He must have heard the UAV’s high-pitched whine—it’s

like the drone of a monster mosquito—but he didn’t look up. He ran down a path between houses, across a field, and back to the riverbank. After fifteen minutes, he slowed to a walk, then stopped and stood with his hands on his knees.

“Sucking wind. Get the coordinates to the QRF.”

As a Quick Reaction Force patrol closed on the GPS coordinates, the fugitive sat down in the shade of a palm tree, beckoning to someone on the river. Just as a square-nosed wooden skiff punted up to the man, the QRF, mounted in two Humvees, converged on the riverbank. The man scrambled to his feet, saw he had no place to run, and half-raised his arms to show he had no weapon.

“A twofer! All right! Send a squad to pick those guys up and bring them here.”

The Iraqis on duty as liaisons in the op center watched the video, looked at the computer screens, and hopped into their tinny pickups to follow the heavily armored American Humvees roaring off to pick up the two prisoners.

The chase was an impressive demonstration of American gear. But technology alone cannot win the war; we need the police. “The cops match names and faces,” Kevin Austin, thirty-five, an International Police Liaison Officer who is a member of the California Highway Patrol, told me. “We could never do that. It’s based on local knowledge.”

I asked Austin how the police should go about using local knowledge to defeat an insurgency. “First,” he said, “develop sources on the streets. Understand the social networks, who lives where. Second, grill one insurgent until he betrays another. Then move fast to make the next arrest. Third, impose fines for criminal offenses. The foot soldiers are in this for money. One hundred bucks to emplace an IED is not worth having your car or house confiscated.”

But carrying out these steps is not easy. In Baghdad, the police are disloyal; in Fallujah, they are struggling to stay alive; and in Haditha, they are starved for resources. So how can the war be won?

Once last summer and once in the fall, General Casey sat down with me and laid out his strategy. He was well aware of the litany of problems. “Look,” he said, “we’re only 75 percent of the way to standing up the Iraqi units as a counterinsurgency force. Then they need a year of seasoning before being on their own.” That pointed toward operational readiness at the end of 2007.

Last year was supposed to have been when the American military turned its attention to the Iraqi police. Casey’s plan was derailed by the eruption of the Shia death squads. He had to rush American forces into Baghdad to prevent its collapse, leaving fewer American units in Anbar, the heart of the Sunni insurgency.

Casey, who has been in command for two and a half years, guards his counsel, reflects carefully before issuing orders, and projects composure. He prowls the battlefields to assess for himself what's going on. I first saw him in 2004, inside the shell-pocked city of Ramadi. He was sitting in a corner, listening to a squad leader. He meets often with battalion commanders to discuss the campaign plan.

"I get it from all sides," Casey joked recently. "Washington, the prime minister, the Sunnis, the Shiites. Hell, people even complained to me when the pope said something about Muslims. I never expected the pope to add to my problems!"

There are striking parallels between Casey and General Creighton Abrams, the four-star Army general who was sent to Vietnam in 1967 to rescue a failing effort there. Abrams changed the strategy from search-and-destroy to counterinsurgency. Casey too switched from offensive operations to counterinsurgency. I hope it will not be written of Casey what history wrote of Abrams: that he deserved a better war. But time isn't on Casey's side. U.S. politics won't allow another year to see how the Iraqi forces develop.

So how, I asked Casey, could you do more with less? Casey urged me to visit Al Qaim, a city of 100,000 on the Syrian border, 200 miles northwest of Baghdad. "Look at what [Lieutenant] Colonel [Julian] Alford accomplished [there]," Casey told me. "He was one of my best battalion commanders. He showed how to turn a city around."

For two years, the Americans had fought al-Qaeda inside Al Qaim, a transit point for foreign fighters who followed the Euphrates Valley to Ramadi and Fallujah. By the summer of 2005, members of the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Sunni force, Al Qaeda in Iraq, had taken control of Al Qaim, while the locals stood on the sidelines. In the late fall, Alford's battalion swept into the city from the west, battled the insurgents block by block, and drove most of them from the town.

Alford then broke his battalion down into smaller units to live alongside Iraqi soldiers, operating from austere combat outposts. He struck a bargain with the Abu Mahal, a local tribe that was feuding with al-Qaeda, and the tribespeople agreed to form a police force.

When I visited in October, the streets were teeming with shoppers. It was the only city in Anbar province where I could walk through a bustling market and listen to merchants complain about commerce, not security. The local bank, with \$100,000 in dinars, had no armed guards. The Abu Mahal tribe was expanding its influence, providing recruits for the police in Rawah, the town to the east. The American civil-affairs colonel told me he had five times more projects in Al Qaim than in any other city in Anbar.

"My microfinance [small loan] projects took off in Qaim," Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Roberto said. "We use Qaim as an example to other city councils. They even have soccer matches in Qaim."

When I accompanied a foot patrol downtown, I noticed that none of the police wore masks to hide their identities. We walked together down a side street, where several policemen proudly pointed out their houses. On one street corner, the balcony of a house had been demolished and the walls gouged by bullets. I asked the police whether they had done that. "No," they laughed. "*Irahibeen* [terrorists] were hiding there, so we brought marines."

The Corps had provided a Marine squad for every police patrol. When police and other tribal members pointed out al-Qaeda hideouts, the marines attacked. The insurgents, stripped of anonymity, were driven from the city. The combination of aggressive Marine grunts with Iraqi forces who possessed local knowledge had worked. If there is a way forward in Iraq, Al Qaim and cities like it are the model. Farther to the north, in Tal Afar, Army Colonel H. R. McMaster successfully employed a similar technique.

One of the keys to success in both Al Qaim and Tal Afar was the effective partnership between the U.S. military and the local police. Both Alford and McMaster had actively cultivated this partnership by breaking down their forces into smaller units so that American leaders worked with Iraqi army platoons and police stations. And both commanders were convinced that lasting progress depended on Iraqi soldiers and police walking the streets, believing that they would win the ten-second firefights against insurgents.

Alford wrote an article in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, proposing to break down an infantry battalion into an "Iraq American Advisor Group." The basic idea was to have combat-seasoned American military leaders present in sufficient numbers amid the local police and Iraqi army forces to ensure they would always prevail in clashes with insurgents. Officers and NCOs "would live, eat, and work with their Iraqi counterparts, donning Iraqi uniforms," and advise them on all aspects of combat. Alford also recommends matching a Quick Reaction Force with each Iraq American Advisor Group. Alford's idea, which I advocated to the members of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group I consulted with last fall, was one of the recommendations of the report issued in December.

In order to rapidly increase the number of advisers we've got deployed in the field, we'll need to take platoons out of our infantry battalions and team them up with Iraqi soldiers and police. Such combined platoons are the first part of a workable solution—a way for us to increase stability while reducing troop levels—and they might become the beginnings of an exit strategy for the long term. The precedent for this is the Combined Action Platoon program in Vietnam, in which a Marine division deployed more than 100 squads (thirteen marines in each) to live in remote hamlets with militias made up of farmers. The average CAP patrolled nine square kilometers holding 5,000 villagers. Many CAPs had no fixed bases, and they kept moving around the hamlets at night so the Viet Cong could not find them.

The CAP program was successful, as far as it went. In February of 1968, several thousand North Vietnamese tried to sneak through the hamlets to assault the northern city of Da Nang. They never made it, as they were ambushed time and again by the tiny CAP units stretched across the paddy lands. Not one CAP village was ever retaken by the Viet Cong. The program's advocates argued that it was a force multiplier, because each marine gained four Vietnamese riflemen who knew the area and spoke the language. (In Ramadi, a battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel William Jurney, used the same argument, telling me that "true partnering with the *jundi* [Iraqi soldiers] increases effectiveness fourfold.")

Former Senator Chuck Robb, a member of the Iraq Study Group, visited Camp Fallujah while I was in Iraq. When we returned to the States, we compared notes and discussed the applicability of the CAPs program to Iraq. Robb had served as a Marine company commander in Vietnam and, like me, had been impressed with the performance of the CAPs. We did the rough math and concluded that the current number of American advisers—3,500—was completely inadequate to advise the more than 500 Iraqi companies and police units.

In the Study Group meetings, Robb proposed that the number of advisers be increased to 20,000. James Baker and the rest of the group agreed. (The report actually calls for 10,000 to 20,000 advisers.) Such a large increase in advisers would be offset by a drawdown of some of the 140,000 Americans currently serving in combat battalions and base-support units. It won't be hard to reduce the present force dramatically. Our 40,000 front-line troops are supported by 100,000 support personnel living in Forward Operating Bases, or FOBs. FOBs devour manpower and they sprout staffs. Many on these staffs—the grunts call them "fobbits"—spend their entire tours inside the base gates.

The Iraq Study Group's report is just one piece of evidence that a strong consensus finally seems to be emerging in support of a more muscular advisory effort. Army Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl, who commanded a company in Anbar, recently published an article in the *Armed Forces Journal* calling for an advisory program based on CAPs. In the Fallujah area, Colonel Nicholson has already doubled the number of advisers. And Lieutenant General James N. Mattis has long been an ardent proponent of embedding advisory units with each Iraqi battalion. As far back as the spring of 2004, when he was commanding the Marine division in Anbar province, Mattis intended to combine Marine platoons with Iraqi forces, but the eruption of the extended battle for Fallujah precluded that.

Iraqis need combat advisers out on the streets at the point of battle, but advisers alone won't turn the tide. Iraq is being lost because American forces have a detailed program for protecting civil rights, but none for winning a war.

Thus the second part of any workable solution must be the Iraqi government's determination to disarm the militias and imprison insurgents and murderers. (The third part of any solution is technical: establishing an effective fingerprint-identification system.) General John Abizaid, who has emerged as Maliki's staunchest supporter, assured Congress in mid-November that the Iraqi prime minister "will take on the militias," and lead. Abizaid, who compares Iraq's leaders to our Founding Fathers, was betting the war on a feckless politician with a poor track record. President Bush seemed to be doing the same when he met with Maliki in Jordan in late November. "One of his frustrations with me is that he believes we've been slow in giving him the tools necessary to protect the Iraqi people," the president said. "And today we had a meeting that will accelerate [the transfer of military authority] ... I appreciate his courage."

But the generals and advisers I spoke with told me that Maliki has not supported his own military. Maliki shielded Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army from dismantlement, they said, and Maliki's ministries failed to provide the necessary financial and logistical support to the Iraqi army and police. American advisers in Anbar province had to drive to Baghdad each month to wheedle Iraqi police and soldiers' pay and food allowances from sclerotic ministries. Maliki had not cracked down on the Shia militias, and had done nothing to offer terms for reconciliation with the Sunnis.

Yet Maliki was insisting that the United States give him operational control of all Iraqi forces, a step that could lead to an army commanded by sectarian loyalists. To insure against that, we should insist on a U.S.-Iraqi joint review board empowered to relieve from duty any Iraqi military or police officers found guilty of malfeasance. If our advisers have no effect on indigenous leaders, there is no sense in advising. The Iraqi army cannot survive without American advisers, and we need a hedge against sectarian politics.

Abizaid's deadline for Maliki to take on the militias runs out between February and April. What happens, I asked a senior American general in Iraq, if Maliki doesn't exert leadership? "Then," the general said, "we continue muddling through."

In 1979, President Carter dispatched a U.S. Army general to Tehran to tell the Iranian army not to interfere as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini swept into power on a tide of popular support. Khomeini returned the favor by seizing the U.S. embassy and establishing an anti-American theocracy.

If Maliki continues to fail, President Bush will face a similar choice: insist on a democracy that has failed or signal that military rule behind a rubber-stamp assembly is preferable to collapse.

Muddling through is not a strategy. 

F. J. "Bing" West, who served as a marine in Vietnam and as an assistant secretary of defense under President Reagan, is the author of *The Village and No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*.

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Thucydides may have been the more trustworthy historian, but Herodotus would have been more fun to share a wineskin with—and is a better guide to the god-filled geopolitics of the current era.

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN



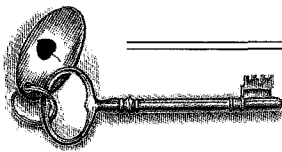
GREEKS VERSUS PERSIANS at the Battle of Thermopylae

A Historian for Our Time

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the greater Middle East constituted a world where circular boats, covered with skins, plied the Tigris; where Egyptians shaved their eyebrows in mourning for a beloved pet cat; and where Libyan tribesmen wore their hair long on one side and shorn on the

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other, and smeared their bodies with vermillion.

"Custom is king of all," Herodotus, the fifth-century B.C. Greek traveler observes, quoting Pindar. He tells of the Massagetae, a people who lived east of the Caspian Sea in what is now Turkmenistan, among whom, when a man grows old, "his relatives come together and kill him, and sheep and goats along with him, and stew all the meat together and have a banquet of it." There was a similar custom among the nearby Issedones, who would clean and gild the skull of the deceased for use as a sacred image. The breadth and complexity of Herodotus's *History* sums up the romantic allure with which the word *antiquity* has been invested.

But Herodotus is now urgently useful for reasons that rise above mere entertainment and exotica. The state of the academy, the moral choices we face in our foreign policy, and in particular the fact that we must learn to think differently about parts of the world like the Middle East all argue for a better acquaintance with this ancient historian.

In the academy, specialization has become both a necessity and a curse. Too much narrow expertise is the inverse of wisdom. But the explosion of facts that need to be categorized demands a growing number of parochial subdivisions within any given field. We must fight against the tendency to become, as the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset feared we all would, "learned ignoramuses."

Among the beneficiaries of this dilemma has been Herodotus's near-contemporary Thucydides (460–400 B.C.), the Athenian general and historian of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides' almost mathematical approach to history extracts clean philosophical principles from the complex reality of what was (by the geographical horizons of antiquity) a world war. By reducing history to war, diplomacy, politics, economics, and little else, Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* boasts a formula that is appealing to specialists who, while mindful of the conceit of the term *political science*, are also leery of the sort of subjective, real-life experiences and captivating anecdotes that are problematic because their worth is difficult to measure. I do not mean to suggest that *The Peloponnesian War* is without riveting stories; it is jammed with them. I say only that, relative to the standards of its time, there is a structured self-editing mechanism at work in Thucydides—yet another reason why he is especially pleasing to modern academic sensibilities, and why he has become the favored Greek among today's policy elites.

And not just today's elites. Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century, the historian Lord Macaulay in the nineteenth century, and Secretary of State George C. Marshall following World War II all stressed the primacy of Thucydides. Indeed, *The Peloponnesian War* may well

be the seminal work on international relations, even as Thucydides is venerated in the West as the founder of enlightened pragmatism in political discourse. He embodies Greek classical values, in which beauty—whether in sculpture or in philosophy—is a consequence of artistic and emotional discipline that leads to proportion, discrimination, and perspective. Accordingly, nothing is worse than excess—of decoration, or of ardor.

And yet, as Thucydides would have been the first to note, reality cannot be reduced to neat equations, whether moral or analytical. The world as it exists often rejects rationality, spare narratives, even truth. If we have learned anything during this age of speedier and increasingly numerous interactions between peoples with different historical experiences, it is that facts matter less than perceptions, especially perceptions informed by raw emotions. It is what people believe that is crucial, not what they actually know. What is needed, therefore, beyond guiding philosophical principles, is a vivid appreciation of *just what's out there*, in the form of the myths, passions, and irrationalities that in any age are central to decision making and, in a larger sense, to the human spirit itself. Romance, rather than being antithetical to realism, is a necessary component of it.

This leads us to Herodotus, the historian of the war between the Greeks and the Persians, which preceded the war among the Greek city-states that Thucydides chronicled. Thucydides wrote some decades after Herodotus. Rather than recount, in the manner of his predecessor, stories of remote events based on secondhand and thirdhand sources—accounts that have, as a consequence, transmogrified into myths—Thucydides tends to write about contemporary history through firsthand sources. As a historian, then, Thucydides is more trustworthy. He is also more limited. Thucydides gives us a distilled rendition of the facts, Herodotus a sparkling impression of what lies just beyond them.

Herodotus evinces a receptivity (it would bear full flower in Shakespeare) to the province of the heart and the attendant salience of human intrigues. He illustrates how self-interest is calculated within a disfiguring whirlwind of passion. Atossa, a wife of Persia's King Darius, appeals to her husband's male vanity in bed, while begging him to invade Greece. She does this as a favor to the Greek doctor who has cured a growth on her breast, and who wants to revisit his homeland. Anyone who has studied the private lives of the Ceausescus in Romania, the Milosevics in the former Yugoslavia, the Gamsakhurdias in Georgia, and the family of Saddam Hussein in Iraq (not only his deranged sons but the sons-in-law he murdered) knows how central such matters are to international politics.

Obviously, Thucydides knows this, too. Fear, honor (ambition), and interest are the pillars through which his

own history works. But it is Herodotus who more colorfully brings these obsessions to life.

Herodotus's subject is Greece and Persia and their respective "barbarian" penumbrae in the Near East and North Africa—the vast, exotic tapestry of what the ancient Greeks referred to as the *oikoumene*, the "inhabited quarter" of the world. According to the late historian Marshall G. S. Hodgson, this is a world that, particularly under the relative peace, tolerance, and sovereignty of the Achaemenid Persian Empire and later empires, provided a sturdy base for the eventual emergence of the great confessional religions. We are vividly acquainted with it thanks to Herodotus. Thucydides might have given a better memorial lecture, but Herodotus—whose curiosity extended beyond politics to natural history, geography, and comparative anthropology (including sexual mores)—would likely have been more fun to share a wineskin with. Herodotus fills the same need that great novels do: he allows us to see the world whole.

Herodotus was born a Persian subject sometime between 490 and 484 B.C. in Halicarnassus, in southwestern Asia Minor. He died in the Greek colony of Thurii, in southern Italy, around 425 B.C. In Thurii, he wrote much of *The History*. (The title of Herodotus's work is variously translated as *The History* or *The Histories*. In this essay, all direct quotes are from David Grene's 1987 translation, but I have also drawn on material from the introductions to translations by A. R. Burn and Tom Griffith.) Herodotus's life shows how ancient Greece was much larger than Greece itself. On book jackets he is portrayed as old and therefore wise, befitting his reputation as the "father of history." Yet he did his wide-ranging traveling in his twenties and thirties. He is derided as the "father of lies," because of the fantastic stories he appears to credulously record. This criticism is as much a misunderstanding as a calumny. The word *history* comes from the Greek *istoreo*, which means "to inquire." The kinds of narratives that arise from such inquiries, or researches, are those originally associated with Herodotus. Because of Herodotus, *history* is, in spirit, a verb: "to find out for yourself."

Herodotus sees himself as a preserver of the memory of civilizations that in some cases had been, and in other cases would yet be, obliterated—in an epoch when record keeping was virtually nonexistent—so he divorces himself from the urge to judge men and events. He knows that nothing is more important than preserving what people said and believed: the myths, the fables, and even the lies that they lived by. Because human beings cannot function without their illusions, the vital truth, he suggests, lies in causation—the strands of perceptions and misperceptions that lead people to take the actions they do.

Above all, he is an indefatigable traveler and inquirer:

I sailed to Tyre in Phoenicia, having learned that there was there a specially holy shrine of Heracles; I saw it indeed, very richly decorated and with many dedicatory offerings ... I talked with the priests of the god there and asked them how long it was since the shrine was established ... they said that the shrine had been founded at the same time as Tyre was settled and that people had lived in Tyre for twenty-three hundred years. I saw in Tyre, also, another temple ... called after Heracles of Thasos; and so I went to Thasos.

His *History* is filled with detailed descriptions of places that to ancient Greeks—as well as to contemporary Americans—are dimly known back-of-beyonds.

He writes about the Scythians who live on the far side of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, where it is so cold that to make mud in the winter you have to light a fire; about the sturgeon that swim in the rivers nearby and can be pickled, and the great mounds of salt that form where these rivers enter the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea). Lurid descriptions of cannibalism and brutality abound in *The History*, like the Persian tradition of occasionally burying children alive as gifts to the "so-called god of the underworld."

Herodotus writes at a time when the concept of the end justifying the means indicates something far baser than the shrewd moral equivocations Machiavelli would later contemplate. To wit, Darius sets up the weaker members of his own army to be annihilated by the Scythians for the sake of a tactical diversion. The fact that Saddam Hussein treated his own forces similarly is evidence of just what a throwback to the ancient world the Iraqi dictator was—and, conversely, how in certain instances, the ancient world is still part of our own.

The old inheres in the new: Herodotus describes the Spartan warriors, who subsist on twice-daily porridge and diluted wine, defeating the Persians, whose general staff ate lavishly upon tables of silver and gold. One can't help but think of the dining facilities, laden with steak and lobster, of the American troops in Iraq, and the meager fare of the insurgents who often run rings around them.

But exotic—and, by our standards, morally repugnant—stories form only the substructure of Herodotus's work. As for the superstructure, here again is Hodgson, whose multivolume masterpiece on the civilization of Islam covers roughly the same geographical terrain:

Herodotus wrote his history, he said, to preserve the memory of the great deeds done by the Greeks and the Persians: unrepeatable deeds that have an enduring claim to our respect. Those deeds cannot be imitated, though they may be emulated and in some sense perhaps surpassed. But even now we dare call no man great whose deeds cannot somehow measure up to theirs.

The essence of Herodotus's *History*, then, is that the more hideous and intractable are the ways of humankind, the more glorious are the heroes who rise above such circumstances. To focus on the worst is not to give oneself up to fate, but to take a necessary step before calculating the possibilities of overcoming it. Artabanus, Xerxes' uncle, tells the Persian king, "He is the best of men who, when he is laying his plans, dreads and reflects on everything that can happen [to] him but is bold when he is in the thick of the action."

In modern times, this message has achieved its highest artistic expression in a work that, even more than Hodgson's, can be likened to that of Herodotus: *The River War: An Historical Account of the Re-Conquest of the Soudan* (1899), which Winston Churchill wrote when he was in his mid-twenties. The young Churchill, like Herodotus, mixes landscape description with geopolitical analysis,

Herodotus fills the same need that great novels do: he allows us to see the world whole.

philosophical ruminations with the arcana of weapons maintenance, and on-the-spot interviews with disquisitions on rainfall, soil fertility, and the behavior of nomadic tribes. Churchill understands that while tribalism is not the highest good, it provides cohesion in places that would otherwise unravel. Like Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century, and the Prussian master strategist Helmuth von Moltke in the nineteenth (whose own travel writing about the Turkish Near East evinces many of the hard-nosed qualities of *The History* and *The River War*), Churchill knows that the truest political and military insights arise from the most uncomfortable of ground-level impressions: few places start out as a clean slate. In considering their actions, wise policy makers work near the limits of what is possible, because all situations have the potential for better and worse outcomes.

Likewise, Herodotus's *History*, if it is about anything, is about understanding the complexities of fate: *moira* in Greek, "the dealer-out of portions." This occurs against the background of a monumental struggle between Greece's relatively enlightened European civilization and Persia's less-enlightened Asiatic one. This Herodotean world resembles our own in its emphasis on the eastern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, and the Iranian plateau. It's a world where successful leaders have an understanding of cultural context and a knack for seeing *just what's out there*—and where unsuccessful leaders have neither. As Artabanus warns Darius to no avail: Do not make war against the Scythians—a swiftly mobile and nomadic people

without cities or sown land, who offer no focal point of attack for a large, well-equipped army.

To manage the demons of fate and uncertainty, one first has to respect their awesome, mystical power. Solon, the Athenian, advises Croesus, the arrogant and wealthy king of Lydia, to call himself lucky, not blessed, no matter how much money he has; as long as he is alive, anything might still happen to him. So it passes that all of Croesus's wealth and power are lost in a war against the Persian ruler Cyrus. As Croesus lies on a pyre, fettered in chains, waiting to be devoured by fire, in lamentation he calls out, "Solon!"

Or take Xerxes. Atop a hill, surveying his navy sailing into the Hellespont, and his army on the adjoining shores and plains, he declares himself a happy man, but then bursts into tears. "For pity stole over me," he explains, "as

I made my meditation on the shortness of the life of man; here are all these thousands, and not a one of them will be alive a hundred years from now." Again, it is Artabanus who tells the king sagely, "Life gives us greater occasion for pity than this," for as short as life is, there are disasters that make it seem long, and make us wish we

were dead. And in fact Xerxes will lose both his navy and army in the course of his invasion of Greece.

Fate is like a brute force of nature against which the individual sometimes struggles in vain. As Polycrates, the benevolent tyrant of Samos, grows richer, he is advised to part with the thing he values most, so as to protect himself against a vengeful god. He goes out in a boat and throws away his gold ring. A few days later a man catches a fish that he gives as a gift to the Samian king. When Polycrates' servants cut up the fish, they find the ring. The thing the king valued most is now back. And it transpires that the king is soon lured to the mainland of Asia Minor by the false promises of the Persian governor of Lydia, who puts him to death by crucifixion.

Fate can also be misinterpreted. Cambyses, king of Persia, has a dream that he is toppled and killed by a man named Smerdis, so he kills his brother of that name. But it is another Smerdis, a Median tribesman, who rises against him. Leaping on his horse to travel to Susa to make war against this Median, Cambyses accidentally pierces his thigh with his own sword. This happens in a place called Ecbatana, in Syria. An oracle had told him he would die in Ecbatana. Cambyses had thought that would be the Median town of that name, where he would die peacefully as an old man. But having misread all the signs, the Persian king dies of a self-inflicted wound in this faraway town.

Of course, fate can be conquered, but it takes all the force of the human spirit. That may be the decisive lesson bequeathed by Herodotus. When the Athenians ask the

oracle at Delphi what will happen if they stand and fight against the Persians, the oracle replies:

Wretched ones, why sit you here? Flee and begone to remotest ends of earth, leaving your homes ...
Many a fortress besides, and not yours alone shall he ruin ...
Get you gone out of the shrine! Blanket your soul with your sorrows.

Rather than give in to this terrible fate, the Athenians consult the oracle a second time. "Give us a better oracle about our fatherland," they say. "Be moved to pity ... or we will never go away from your shrine but remain right here till we die." Then the priestess gives a different, more obscure answer:

A wall of wood, which alone shall abide unsacked by the foemen;
Well shall it serve yourselves and your children ...
Do not abide the charge of horse and foot that come on you,
A mighty host from the landward side, but withdraw before it.
Turn your back in retreat; on another day you shall face them.
Salamis, isle divine, you shall slay many children of women ...

The Athenians convince themselves that if this oracle had meant ruin for them, it would have said "O cruel Salamis" rather than "Salamis, isle divine." Thus, they prepare for a great sea battle at Salamis with their wooden wall of ships, and go on to save Greece. The story shows that even the Delphic oracle can be challenged by men determined toward a different fate. But to state such a fact rarely suffices; without a gripping narrative to back it up, a moral principle is a mere declaration. That is the significance of *The History*.

Take the story of the Three Hundred Spartans at Thermopylae, who are prepared to stand fast in the face of annihilation by the Persians. Leonidas, king of Sparta, was ambitious, not to live but to leave a great name. For there had been a prophecy that either Sparta would be destroyed by the barbarians or a Spartan king would be killed. Herodotus sets up Leonidas for glory in the way that he introduces him, in biblical form, "Leonidas ... the son of Anaxandrides, the son of Leon, the son of Eurycratides, the son of Anaxandrus, the son of Eurycrates, the son of Polydorus," and so on.

True heroism requires a moral basis. Herodotus gives us stories that reveal the vast difference between the values of the Greeks and those of the Persians. After honoring Xerxes' campaign with generous gifts, Pythius the Lydian asks the Persian king a lone favor: that of his five sons, who all intend to fight with Xerxes against the

Greeks, the eldest be released from service so that he may be the caretaker of his father's possessions. The request fills Xerxes with anger. He orders his men to cut the eldest son of Pythius in half "and to set the two halves of the body on each side of the road ... and the army should march between them." There are no limits to this Persian monarch's cruelty and presumptuousness: he even orders that the sea itself be scourged, for delivering up a storm that destroyed a bridge he had built.

Contrast such behavior with that of Pausanias, king of Sparta, who defeats the Persian army at Plataea. Because the Persians cut off and impaled the head of Leonidas at Thermopylae, Pausanias is urged by a fellow Spartan to do likewise to the body of Mardonius, the Persian general. Pausanias refuses, explaining:

Such actions are more fit for barbarians than Greeks, and even in them we find it a matter of offense. For conduct such as this, God forbid that I should find favor with ... any who approve such acts! It is enough for me to please the men of Sparta by decent action and decent words.

While Herodotus leads us to a majestic and, I would argue, morally based worldview, what sets his *History* apart from other works, both ancient and modern, is his powerful evocation of just what human beings are capable of believing, and how deeply they do indeed believe, for the sake of their own salvation. It is a belief made tangible by the fact that the ancients, living without science and technology, saw and heard differently—more vividly—than we do.

Take the story of Phidippides, a professional runner sent from Athens to Sparta as a herald to plead for help against the Persians. Phidippides tells the Athenians that on Mount Parthenium, en route to Sparta, he saw the god Pan, who bade him ask his countrymen: "Why do you pay no heed to Pan, who is a good friend to the people of Athens, has been many times serviceable to you, and will be so again?" The Athenians are convinced that Phidippides has told the truth, and so, as Herodotus recounts,

when the Athenian fortunes had again settled for the good, they set up a shrine of Pan under the Acropolis and propitiated the god himself with sacrifices and torch races, in accord with the message he had sent them.

This is more than just a charming story; it may well be the truth as the Athenians related it to Herodotus. The runner probably believed he saw Pan. *He did see Pan*. A vision of the god was likely, given his fatigue, the pantheon inherent in his belief system, and the wonder-filled fear of the physical elements that has since been lost to human beings. The ancient world was "settled so sparsely that nature was not yet eclipsed by man," Boris Pasternak

wrote in *Doctor Zhivago*. "Nature hit you in the eye so plainly and grabbed you so fiercely and so tangibly by

CIMICIFUGA

White pipe cleaners,
chalky flags in wind,
sprang up unplanted
at the wood's edge,
near rocks and icy moss,
oddly in November,
whose days thirst for light.
What an unpromising start,
conceived last summer
in the droppings of a bird
that fueled at my feeder
for the long flight.
Even its English names—
black cohosh,
snakeroot—
sound as though someone
didn't want it.

Is this what death is like,
hope before darkness,
or is it waking?
On this land once,
a dying woman
of the Montauk people
ground star-white flowers
into a paste mixed with rainwater
and drank to her recovery.
Cimicifuga racemosa,
windsocks riding air
after roses are ash,
your name a rainbow of vowels
that sing of light,
glimmer in bone-dry woods,
blaze in our winter night,
deliver us.

—GRACE SCHULMAN

Grace Schulman's recent books include *Days of Wonder: New and Selected Poems* (2002) and, ed., *The Poems of Marianne Moore* (2003). Her new collection, *The Broken String*, will be published this spring.

the scruff of the neck that perhaps it really was still full of gods." If rationalism and secularism have taken us so far that we can no longer imagine what Phidippides saw, then we are incapable of understanding—and consequently defending ourselves against—many of the religious movements that reverse the Enlightenment and affect today's geopolitics.

Indeed, Xerxes' decision to invade Greece—after getting so much conflicting advice on the matter—may have come not from any rational analysis but from a dream. Herodotus is not credulous. As he writes, and repeats in different words throughout his work, "I must tell what is said, but I am not at all bound to believe it, and this comment of mine holds about my whole *History*."

Writing about Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, D. H. Lawrence suggests that the story is deeper than metaphysics or ordinary symbolism. The same goes for many of Herodotus's accounts. The Persian army that disappears in an Ethiopian sandstorm. The lions that kill all the camels in a Persian encampment, leaving the other animals and human beings alone. A prisoner's chopped-off hands, left clinging to the gates of the Temple of Demeter the Lawgiver on the island of Aegina. Here are images and cultural revelations in brushstrokes of the most glittering oils. The Trausi, a Thracian tribe, who surround a newborn baby and lament for it, for all the ill it must endure, even as they bury their dead with "joy and delight." The blind Egyptian pharaoh, who is told by an oracle that he will be cured by washing his eyes with the urine of a woman who has known only her husband: after trying the piss of one of his wives after another, he is cured only by that of his last wife; and he kills them all except for her. The Babylonian women, who must go to the temple of Aphrodite "and sit there and be lain with by a strange man"; beautiful women depart the temple quickly enough, but the ugly ones sometimes wait years, veritable prisoners of the temple, before a man agrees to lie with them.

It would be naive to think that our world is not, in its own way, just as fantastic, just as unreasonable. Given the adversaries we have fought, and are likely to fight still; given the mirages that cloud our own judgment about distant places about which we think we know much, but in fact know little; given all of that, the dreamlike delusions and psychoses revealed in the stories of Herodotus provide a richer insight into what we are up against than does much contemporary analysis. Coping with the world of the coming decades will require an arresting imagination. Leaders who cannot mentally escape their own narrow slots of existence will fail. Herodotus will be as valuable as Thucydides. ▀

Robert D. Kaplan is an *Atlantic* national correspondent and the Class of 1960 Distinguished Visiting Professor in National Security at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis. His latest book is *Imperial Grunts*.

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THE ATLANTIC'S
STATE of the UNION 2007

the INNOVATORS

Rigidly staying the course has *never* really been the American way. The United States is a restless nation—at its worst, prone to fits of severe attention deficit disorder; at its best, given to rapid adaptation, even reinvention.

In this, *The Atlantic's* fifth annual State of the Union special section, we look at four areas of American life where innovation is both badly needed and under way. The stories focus on remarkable people trying to remake our politics, our judiciary, our schools, and our energy economy—often against heavy odds. Whether or not these efforts succeed individually, collectively they tell a story of ferment and possibility that is distinctly American.

Photographs by David Deal

CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN ROBERTS: JASON REED/REUTERS

Graphics by Ryan Morris and Graeme Wood



THE EDUCATOR

Doris Roché-Hicks is helping lead an education revolution in New Orleans.

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THE JUDGE

A conversation with Chief Justice John Roberts

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THE STRATEGIST

Doug Bailey and Unity08 seek to reshape our politics.

page 114



THE SCIENTIST

Craig Venter aims to cure the planet's energy woes, one organism at a time.

page 120

Hurricane Katrina destroyed one of America's worst school systems and made New Orleans the nation's laboratory for educational reform.

But can determined educators and entrepreneurs transcend the damage of the flood—and of history?

BY AMY WALDMAN



LEADING THE CHARGE (from left):
Doris Roché-Hicks, Daniel J. Hudson,
and James M. Huger

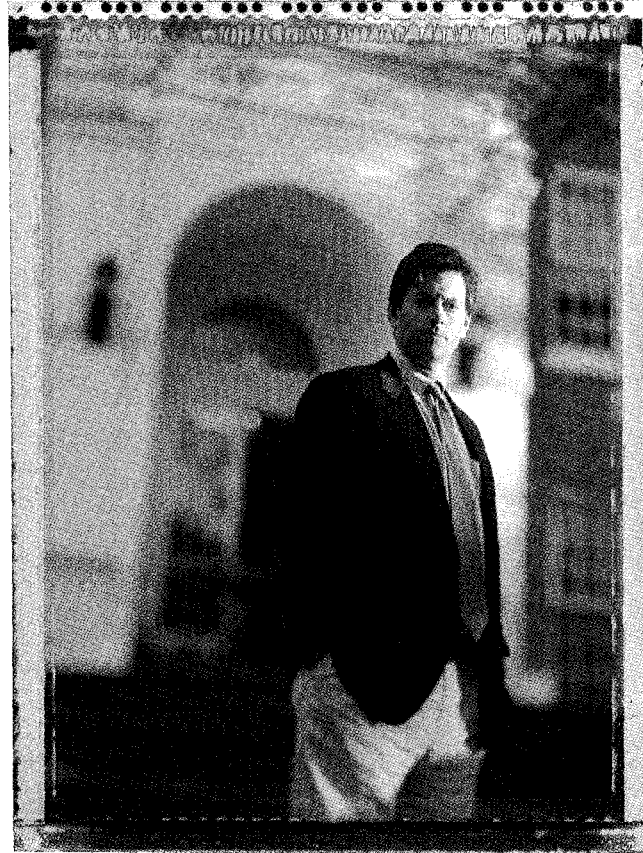
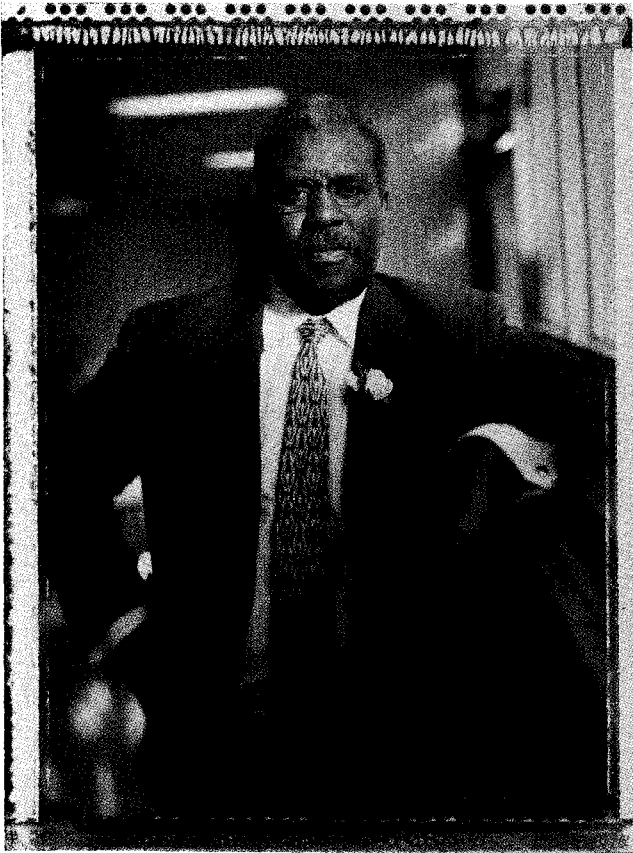
Reading, Writing, Resurrection

In the summer of 2006, the New Orleans landscape came to include, along with blue tarps and white trailers, moldering ruins and overgrown lawns, and WE'RE HOME and FOR SALE signs (sometimes on the same house), a series of placards promoting new schools. The signs, planted along the grassy medians of boulevards like St. Charles and St. Claude, bore a less obvious connection to Hurricane Katrina than those offering mold removal or "hurricane attorneys." But they were every bit as much Katrina's doing.

The storm ravaged the city's architecture and infrastructure, took hundreds of lives, exiled hundreds of thousands

of residents. But it also destroyed, or enabled the destruction of, the city's public-school system—an outcome many New Orleanians saw as deliverance. That system had begun with great promise, in 1841, as one of the first in the Deep South. It had effectively ended, in 2005, in disaster—and not just the natural kind. Its defining characteristics were financial high jinks and low academic performance. On the last state achievement test before Katrina hit, 74 percent of eighth-graders had failed to demonstrate "basic" skills in English/Language Arts, and 70 percent scored below "basic" in math. The Orleans Parish School Board, which ran the city's schools, was \$450 million in debt. Yet these

DAVID DEAL



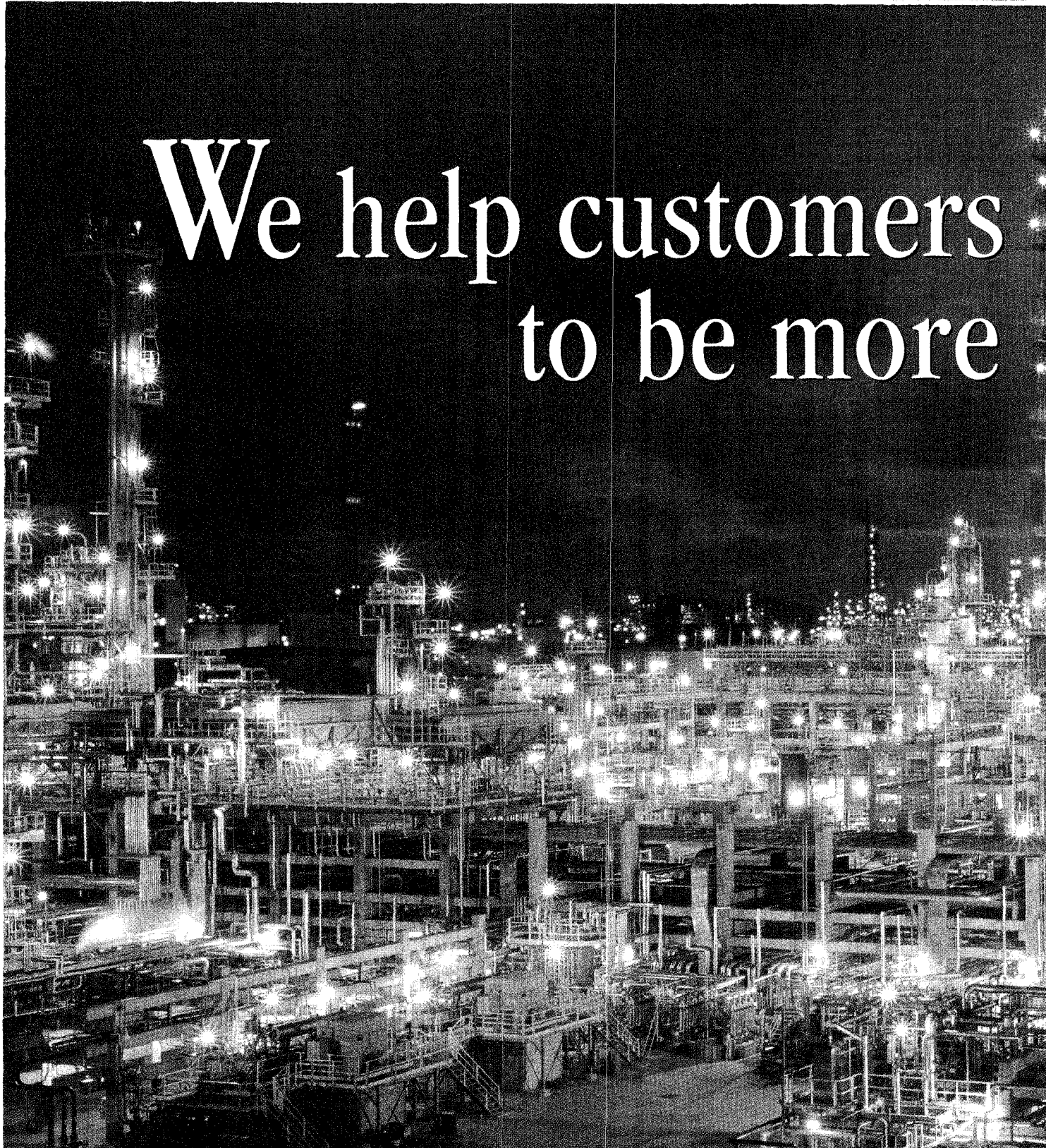
numbers did not begin to capture the day-to-day texture of the schools: when students held a press conference to express their post-Katrina wishes, they asked for textbooks, toilet paper, and teachers who liked them.

The floodwaters, so the talk went, had washed this befouled slate clean—had offered, in a state official's words, a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reinvent public education." In due course, that opportunity was taken: three months after Katrina, the state legislature deemed 107 of the 128 city-run public schools "failing" and seized control of them for five years. (Before the storm the state had already placed five failing schools in what it called the Recovery School District, then converted them to charter schools.) Stripped of most of its domain and financing, the Orleans Parish School Board fired all 7,500 of its teachers and support staff, effectively breaking the teachers' union. And the Bush administration stepped in with millions of dollars for the expansion of charter schools—publicly financed but independently run schools that answer to their own boards. The result was the fastest makeover of an urban school system in American history—and a patchwork nonsystem of bewildering complexity and bewitching promise.

In the fall of 2006, estimates placed the city's population at less than half its pre-Katrina number of about 455,000, and fifty-three public schools were slated to open. Of those, the Orleans Parish School Board would be running just five—schools that had not been taken over because they weren't failing. The Louisiana Department

of Education, which had never before run schools, would reconstitute and run seventeen under the Recovery School District. The rest—thirty-one in total—would be charter schools, either started from scratch or converted from existing public schools, and authorized by either the state or the city. New Orleans, barely a presence in the charter-school movement before the storm, now had a higher proportion of charter schools than any other American city—and unlike most of the country's 4,000 such schools, these had the backing of the establishment. Most radical of all, the neighborhood school had been banished—parents would have total freedom to choose which school their children would attend, no matter where they lived. Introducing school choice and weakening teachers' unions had both long been goals of many educational reformers. Circumstance had made New Orleans the laboratory for these ideas. Ben Kleban, a charter-school proponent drawn to New Orleans by this flourishing, called it "the biggest experiment in a system of schools of choice we've ever seen." Leslie Jacobs, a member of the state school board, called it "the most market-driven system in the United States."

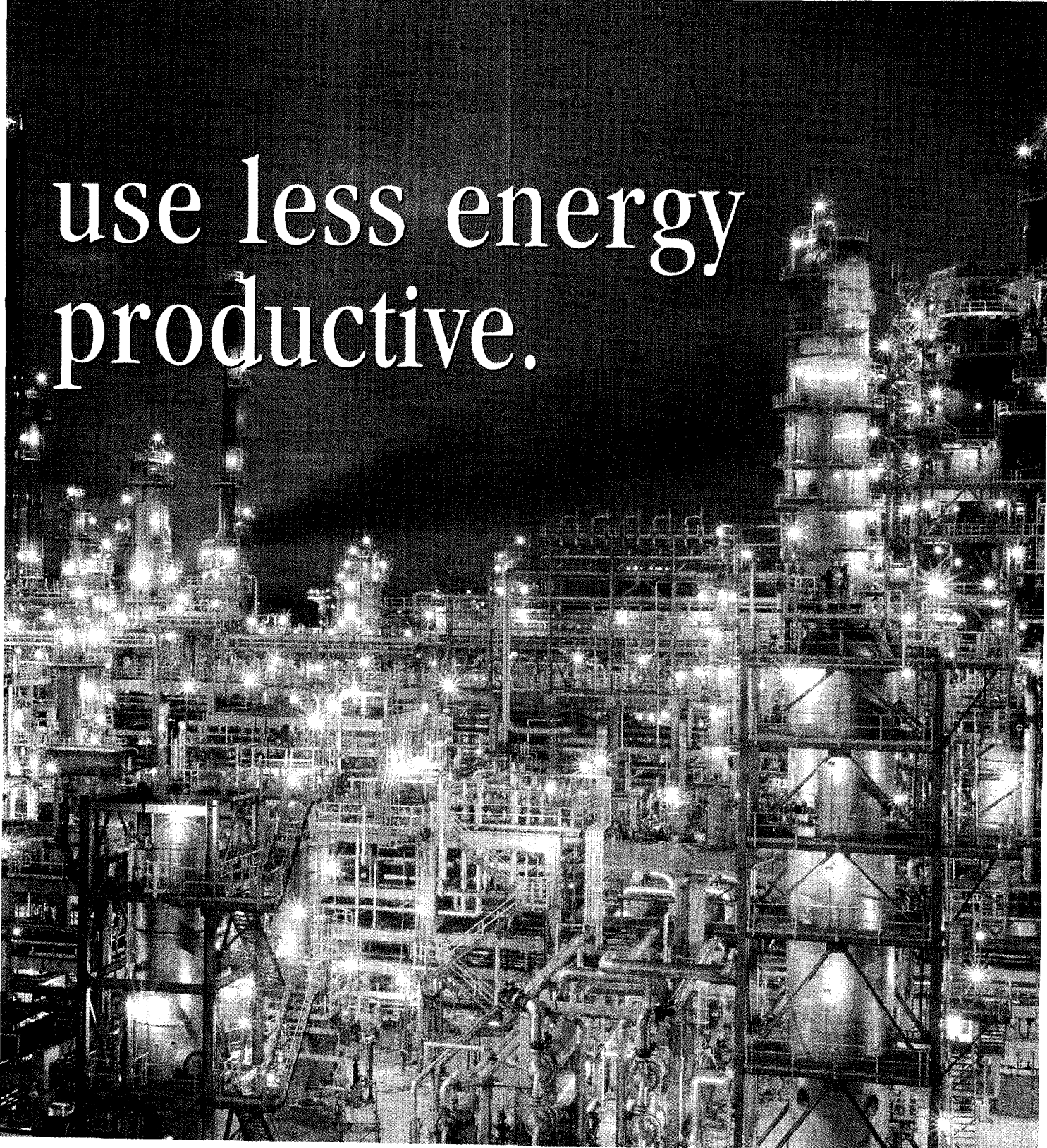
Climatic torpor drapes New Orleans in August, and nearly a year after Katrina, the city's stalled recovery seemed to add a spiritual malaise. Amid the stagnation, a singular energy gripped education. Charter-school boards raced to learn the nuts and bolts of operation, since they, not a centralized district headquarters, would have to shoulder everything from budgeting to food service.



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Contractors worked to repair school buildings, if not always at the desired pace. The Sheraton Hotel on Canal Street became a pedagogical bazaar, with professional-development workshops on floor after floor. Members of the "movement," as charter-school proponents call themselves, flooded into New Orleans to help its nascent schools, as did idealistic young teachers. Educational publishers came to peddle reading and math programs for urban students. There was an openness, a sense of possibility, heightened by the abstraction of still-absent children.

The schools that were taking shape would bear, far more than those in a traditional system, the imprimaturs of their creators: each school's driving force sought to apply his or her own beliefs, experiences, and ideas of how to make public education work. Some were outsiders who thought they could save New Orleans not just from Katrina but from itself. Others were locals, with personal or ideological investments in the city's education system. Their success or failure would not be known for several years, but the decisions being made in the summer and fall of 2006 would long reverberate. So would a still-unanswered question: Can you rebuild a school system when you haven't decided whether to rebuild a city?

THE BUSINESSMAN: MARKETING A 'GREAT PRODUCT'

On a rainy August night, James M. Huger, a thirty-eight-year-old scion of Uptown New Orleans gentry, stood before a group of parents to pitch his new charter school, Lafayette Academy of New Orleans. Among the new schools, Lafayette had been one of the most prolific advertisers—on radio and television as well as in the streets. This was because Huger, whose business interests ranged from real estate to construction to parking lots, understood the marketplace better than most. Under the New Orleans schools' new governance, the money—state and federal—would follow the students, and so every charter school needed a critical number of students just to break even. Recognizing that the power to choose lay with the parents, Huger had scheduled a series of open houses to woo them. "I'm a real-estate developer; I don't know the first thing about running a school," he told them, but he promised that his Choice Foundation would create an excellent one—a "great product," as he put it.

Huger's avocation, he says, is free enterprise—capitalism, and the principles that make it work. By his reckoning, competition and choice made America great, and they could transform New Orleans's schools too. Give parents the right to leave bad schools, he believed, and good ones would emerge. Less than a year before Katrina, he had founded the nonprofit Choice Foundation to promote this idea, but he hadn't progressed far. Little did he know, he would say later, that he should have been praying for a major hurricane.

That hurricane had placed Huger before these parents and brought about what he described to them as a "total revolution in education." Lafayette Academy's building was still under repair, so for the open house, Huger had commandeered the auditorium of his own alma mater, the Isidore Newman School, a private educational redoubt of the city's elite. Newman's student body had never been more than one-fifth nonwhite (even as the city itself became two-thirds black). This stint in the auditorium was as close as many of these parents were likely to come to a Newman education. But Huger was promising something almost as good: "a private-school education at no cost to you," as one of his staff put it.

Huger had partnered with Mosaica Education Inc., a for-profit educational management firm that administers ninety charter schools in the United States and abroad and has developed an innovative, interdisciplinary curriculum. He had hired both a chief administrative officer—with thirty-seven years of experience in Department of Defense schools—and a seasoned Orleans Parish principal. They regaled the parents with talk of the Socratic method and critical thinking, of one computer for every three students, and of individualized learning plans—in short, a "gold standard." And if gold were not incentive enough, there were goodies: donated backpacks and school supplies for everyone at the open house. Huger—white, well-educated, well-off—came across as someone who had never wanted for much, but he wanted the endorsement, or more accurately the enrollment, of the mostly black, less advantaged parents arrayed before him.

He had it. At the evening's end, parents scurried to register, and by school's start, Huger was king of the marketplace: Lafayette had nearly 800 students, more than any other elementary school in New Orleans. Its conditions, though, were not entirely his to set. Huger would have preferred that his school have selective admissions, by which students are screened on criteria like test scores and grade-point averages. He also would have preferred more of what he delicately called "diversity"—as in white children. But under the guidelines, choice ran only one way: Huger would have to educate any child who chose him.

THE OUTSIDERS: 'MISSIONARY WORK'

In August of 2006, Robin Jarvis had an impressive title—acting superintendent of the Recovery School District—but no office to match: she was working out of a few classrooms and, on occasion, her car. Her portfolio was large: she was to reconstitute the seventeen schools the state would run in the fall, and oversee the charter schools authorized by the state (there were separate city-authorized charter schools) and the real estate (102 buildings) the state had acquired through the takeover. Mindful of the legendarily corrupt, bloated school bureaucracy of Orleans Parish



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before the storm, state officials wanted a lean operation, so Jarvis's staff numbered about a dozen. That meant, to a great degree, that the success or failure of this experiment rested on her business-attired shoulders.

The state had not planned on running the seventeen schools itself; it had thought more charter operators would fill the vacuum. But only ten of forty-four applications for new schools had passed the state screening process (and three of those ten schools would later have their charters withdrawn). So it was left to Jarvis, a forty-three-year-old redhead, to start a new school district from scratch and fulfill the legislative mandate to operate its schools in the manner "most likely to improve the academic performance of each student." Given how far behind the children were, and given their post-Katrina trauma, someone had described her job to her as "missionary work." To a Baptist minister's daughter, that sounded about right.

Jarvis's graduate thesis had been on educational leadership, and she had been a teacher, then a principal, then an assistant superintendent in the state Department of Education. She thought she knew, as a result, what the schools needed, and she conveyed her plans with composed assurance. She wanted a culture of high expectations. Class size would be restricted to twenty or twenty-five, depending on the grade, and the school day for teachers extended to eight and a half hours. Experts from the University of Toronto and elsewhere would provide professional development. Jarvis would handpick principals, who would handpick teachers from a pool that had been selected through a screening process decided on by Jarvis and her staff. In a sense, although the schools she was running were not charters, Jarvis had the freedom of a charter-school operator—but also the burdens. Most charter schools take a year to prepare before opening, but each of the various New Orleans charter operators was struggling to launch one or two schools in only three to five months; in that same period, Jarvis was trying to launch seventeen. And she was an outsider: her home, Baton Rouge, was about eighty miles away, but an immeasurable distance in "culture" (to invoke a word she and others used with more regularity than specificity).

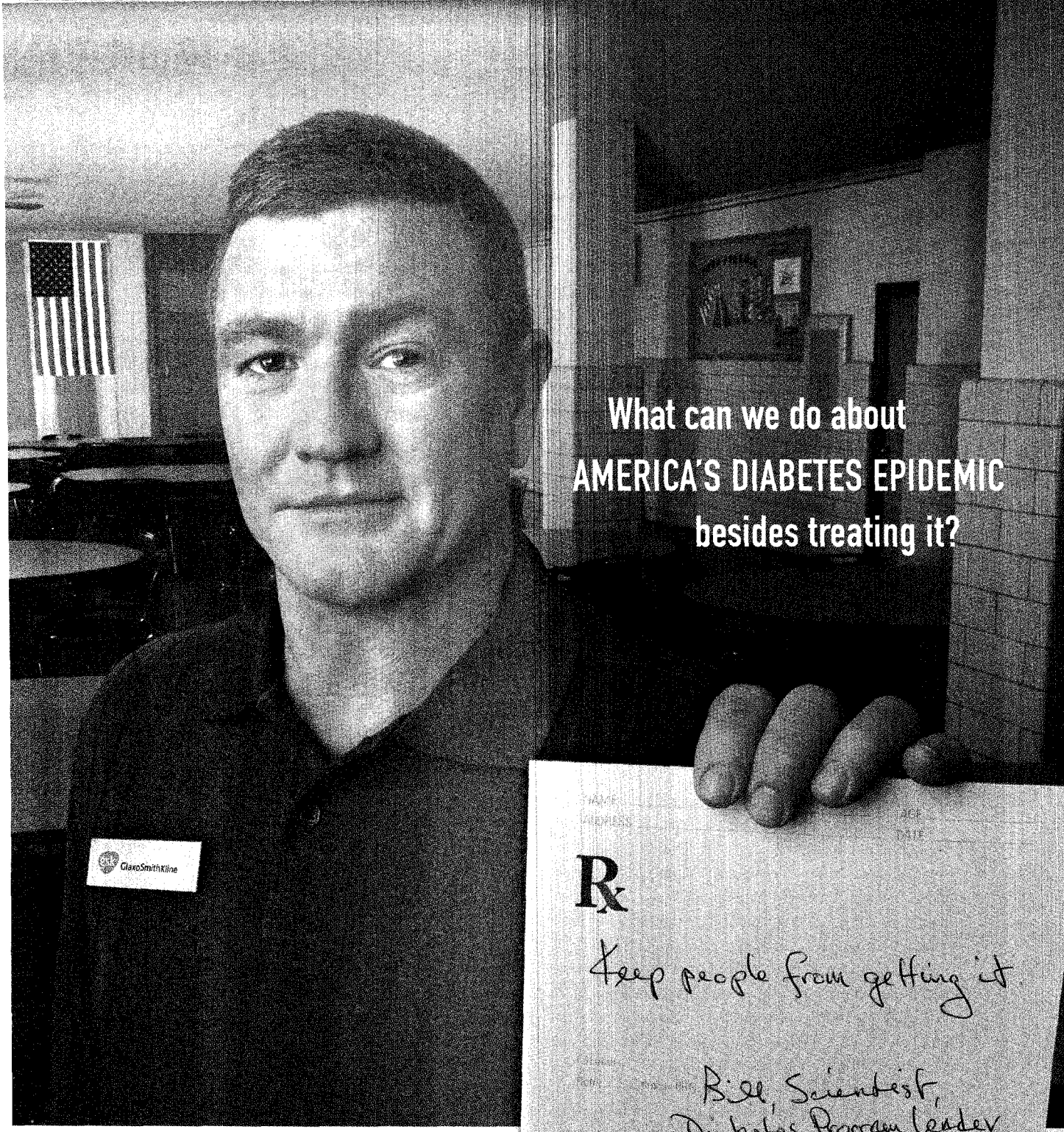
For a bureaucrat, Jarvis displayed unusual political skills. Her humor was disarming, her forthrightness refreshing. She needed that politesse, not least because she was a white woman leading the state takeover of a largely black school system. New Orleans had always been, and remained, a profoundly racialized place, attuned to gradations of color and their implications for status, power, and resources. Schools were a place to both enforce and challenge the racial order. The progressivism of the northern reformers who founded New Orleans's public schools extended to admitting immigrants—but not blacks. Reconstruction had brought a brief period of enforced integration, but then, with the restoration

of local power, came segregation. It persisted until 1960, when four African American girls integrated the New Orleans elementary schools. But again integration was short-lived. White flight began in earnest in the 1970s, and by 2004, the students in the city's public schools were 93 percent black, as were most of the system's teachers and employees. Jarvis's every step, or misstep, would be analyzed through the prism of race.

Racial politics had always contributed to the system's poor performance, but that was not the only factor. The schools had long been underfunded by the city's tax-resistant planter and merchant classes. An insistence on maintaining not only racial but also gender segregation into the 1950s had further stretched the system's resources. A 1909 study of urban schools placed New Orleans's white schools at the bottom of nearly every national ranking; another survey thirty years later found little change. Middle-class blacks had followed whites out of the system long before Katrina. By 2004, 75 percent of public-school students were receiving free or reduced-price lunch, and fewer than half the students who started kindergarten graduated from high school. (The only exception to this uniform failure had been the city's magnet schools, which used admission criteria—grades and test scores—to cream off the best students. These students were far more likely to be middle class—both black and white—than those in the regular public schools, and parental involvement followed apace. The magnet schools also drew many of the best administrators and teachers, and consistently produced the best results.)

But if Jarvis faced a daunting legacy, she also had an unusually free hand to erase it. She had no huge bureaucracy to contend with, and New Orleans, perhaps alone among American cities, no longer had a teachers' union to reckon with. For much of the city's educational history, the teachers had been the heroes, stalwarts who soldiered on, underpaid, amid racial tugs-of-war. But as they grew in strength, thanks in large part to the United Teachers of New Orleans, critics came to see them as villains: protected by tenure, shuffled from school to school, they were blamed for many of the schools' ills. In a stroke, Katrina had defanged the union. In the Recovery School District both principals and teachers were now being hired on one-year contracts, promising new accountability. And all teacher and principal applicants, including those who had worked in Orleans Parish schools, would be hired only after passing both a skills-assessment test and an interview. "I have to ensure I have the very best-quality teachers," Jarvis explained on the witness stand in civil court, fending off a lawsuit that teachers had brought against the test. "It is what we are doing for the children."

But through the summer and into the fall, high standards kept colliding with limited resources, human and otherwise. The pool of teachers was too small, a reflection,



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in part, of trying to revive a school system in a city that remained half-dead. Rents had risen as much as 70 percent since Katrina, to levels prohibitive for old and new teachers alike. Eighty percent of the city's licensed child-care centers were gone after Katrina, impeding parents' return to work. Government grants for home repair moved at a trickle. The continuing lack of a rebuilding plan—or rather, a surfeit of rebuilding plans, but a lack of actual rebuilding—had exiles in Houston, Atlanta, and elsewhere holding off on return. And the Recovery School District had not helped itself by waiting until the summer of 2006 to begin hiring teachers.

Many teachers had lost their homes and were living in trailers. They were fighting for insurance payments, caring for elderly parents traumatized by the storm, gutting their homes. The same people expected to shoulder the burden of reinventing the public schools, in short, were reinventing their lives. Being fired had been humiliating, and having to submit to a skills test was degrading, and some simply stayed away.

laborers sweating to repair a school or educators like him who came to run one. New Orleans had always had unusual generational depth—families whose residence in the city extended back centuries. Katrina had broken this lattice of relationships, dispersed its pieces, and begun assembling a new one in its place. Hudson, in the midst of a year off when Katrina hit, decided to come help New Orleans reach into the ashes to “pull out the phoenix.” At fifty-nine, he figured he had ten working years left. With Jarvis's endorsement, he would spend as many of them as he could as principal of Sarah T. Reed High School in New Orleans East.

Hudson's task was to execute Jarvis's ideas about how to make a good school. In theory, Hudson had full freedom to choose his teachers; he just had to find them. “One thing that's going on is that folks can't pass a simple test—children's level,” Hudson told me. He thought the state should hold firm in upholding qualification requirements, despite the holes in his staff (he still needed four science teachers, to start).

Katrina washed the slate clean, providing a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reinvent public education.” The result was the fastest makeover of an urban school system in American history.

Because the state was not releasing the skills test to journalists, I signed up to take it myself. Along with English skills at the eighth-grade level and math at the fourth-grade, the test included multiple-choice questions about “best practices” and educational theory, and an essay. I wasn't convinced that it was a reliable indicator of whether someone would make a good teacher (I became even less convinced when I passed), but I supposed it could weed out those who couldn't handle basic math or English—which turned out to be one-fourth of those who took it. This further depleted the pool: there simply were not enough qualified teachers—at least as defined by the test—to go around. In post-Katrina New Orleans, Jarvis's desires for both small classes and excellent teaching were proving incompatible.

In a way, the gap between demand and supply gave teachers more power than ever. They had their pick of schools; at training sessions, principals circled like suitors at a Jane Austen ball. One morning, as the Recovery School District's principals gathered for training, one of them, Daniel J. Hudson, studied a candidate's résumé. “You can stop looking at that résumé,” another principal said with a friendly smirk. “She's on my staff.” Hudson crushed the paper.

A burly onetime football player who had last worked as a principal in Washington, D.C., Hudson was part of an infusion of new blood into the city, whether Hispanic

On September 8, I saw Hudson in the Recovery School District's newly opened headquarters. After stumbling across a crowd of applicants waiting to take the skills test, he began working the room. “Any science and math teachers?” A man nodded. “Certified? Certified science and math?” The man nodded again. Hudson looked ready to dance a jig. He gave the man his number and told him to call “any time, day or night,” when (not if) he passed the skills assessment. Hudson pressed on: “Any male PE teachers?”

His school was just hours from opening.

THE LOCAL: UP FROM THE LOWER NINE

In the pre-Katrina landscape, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary for Science and Technology was a standout—a pride of the Lower Ninth Ward, one of New Orleans's poorest neighborhoods. King's modern building, completed in 1995, towered over a neighborhood of mostly shotgun houses. It had a piano studio, a science lab, a large playground, and a public library attached to it. “We never failed to remind the kids of what they had,” Doris Roché-Hicks, the principal, said. “We taught them to take care of it.”

With a performance score of 85.9, just below the state average, King was still considered a failing school—but it was the best-performing of the 107 so designated. Almost all of the city's better-performing public schools either

screened students based on past performance or served higher-income neighborhoods. Ninety-six percent of King's 715 students were receiving free or reduced-price lunch, and King had the highest performance score of any school with that profile and number of students.

The secret to its relative success was a dedicated staff led by a charismatic principal. Roché-Hicks, sixty, had been running the school since 1995. A tall woman with rounded features and an aureole of beige curls, she has the timing and deadpan delivery of a stand-up comic, as well as a knack for both leading from above and encouraging ideas from below. She was raised in the Ninth Ward herself and had been educating its children for more than twenty-five years, as a teacher and then as a principal. When she called—and she was not above making wake-up calls to the homes of tardy students—parents listened.

Katrina and the subsequent flooding had walloped the Lower Nine, as the neighborhood was known, leaving twenty-two adults and children connected to King among the dead. A year later, the only sign of life amid the ruined houses and bent trees was the occasional trailer. Although the first floor of Roché-Hicks's own house had flooded, she put her recovery on hold to focus on the school's. She knew neither the city nor the state would move quickly to reopen a school in an empty neighborhood, even as she knew the neighborhood would not come back without the school. King's fate was thus intimately tied to the larger questions about race and rebuilding that were stalking New Orleans.

Roché-Hicks had opposed charter schools because she thought they would kill off public schools. But after Katrina, a charter was her only hope for King's resurrection. She gathered a board, and in the spring of 2006, King's charter application was one of the first approved. There was no time to celebrate, though, because Roché-Hicks and her staff had too much to do. They scrambled to buy insurance, arrange transportation, hire custodians, register students—all without knowing where their school would be housed. Only King's first floor had completely flooded, but the state had deemed the building uninhabitable. King's leaders were pushing hard for the renovation of their original site, but the school needed an interim building for the fall. The state's offer: a decayed seventy-seven-year-old school.

That school had been well built—because, Roché-Hicks loved to point out, it had been built for whites—but it had not been well maintained. It needed major rehabilitation, and as opening day neared and repair work had not progressed very far, Roché-Hicks began to agitate about the state's lack of urgency when it came to “children of color.” Her sentiments were genuine, but also strategic: she was situating her school's struggle in a long history of educational racism. In part because of the King name, the local and national civil-rights establishment rallied to

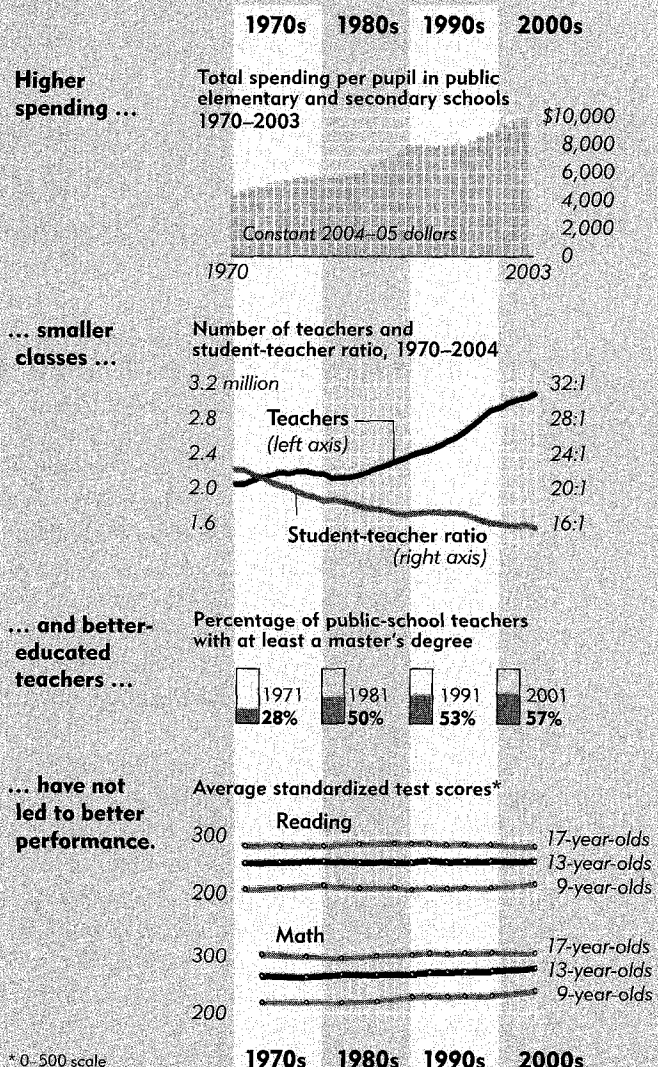
the school's cause. When the state informed the school's leaders that their temporary site would not be ready for opening day, the school told its parents and students to show up anyway. After a prayer, an old-time civil-rights rally got under way. Like props, little girls in braids and bows and little boys in shorts below their knees arrayed themselves on the steps in front of the locked doors.

Charles Steele, the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, raced in, fresh from Atlanta, to liken officials like Jarvis to the Ku Klux Klan. He then led protesters on a march to sit in at the Recovery School District headquarters. After a lengthy meeting, the white Jarvis sat at a press conference encircled by black activists.

STATE OF EDUCATION

IMMUNE TO CONVENTIONAL REMEDIES

Despite serious efforts to improve the performance of U.S. students, it has been flat since the 1970s.



She had been outflanked, and she had the grace to recognize it: Roché-Hicks agreed to accept a further delay in King's opening in return for a better interim building—and the state's promise to try to repair the Lower Nine site by early 2007.

"They got a great classroom experience today!" Steele said brightly. "How many kids can say they marched with Dr. Martin Luther King's organization?"

THE OUTSIDERS: FIGHTING DESPAIR

Exile had changed the parents and students of New Orleans. In Texas, or Indiana, or Mississippi, they had found schools that were both better and harder. They came home wanting more, and the city, with its new educational setup and promise of total choice, seemed poised to deliver it. So it did not sit well when some of the choice turned out to be illusory.

The selective-admissions schools, which had opened their doors to all comers in the flood's wake, had put the gates back up. All four of the public day schools being run by the Orleans Parish School Board practiced selective admissions, and the city, unlike the state, was allowing

meant reinventing every aspect of the wheel. Only as schools opened did the Recovery School District staff realize that they had no system to track attendance. And for all the talk about culture, there was a cultural deafness. New Orleans has always been riven geographically: Uptown, Downtown; East Bank, West Bank; Eighth Ward, Ninth Ward. Total school choice had mixed their children together, and city residents shook their heads, predicting fights that soon came.

The struggle for teachers was continuing—the Recovery School District opened its schools 106 teachers short. At the meeting, a state official said that only fourteen of twenty-four applicants had passed the skills test that day. Forty calls to teachers who had narrowly failed, to ask if they would be interested in substituting, yielded only two yeses. And teachers were exercising their power: "When we try to move teachers [from school to school], they're quitting on us," one official told the meeting. "Our quitting ratio is higher than our hiring ratio."

Much of the Recovery School District's work involved trying to manage the web of mostly out-of-state contractors that had replaced the school-board bureaucracy.

More was at stake in this experiment than a chance for reformers to see what worked. Without a better-educated populace, New Orleans would sink further into the metaphorical swamp.

the charter schools it authorized to practice selective admissions too. In Katrina's immediate aftermath, the Orleans Parish School Board had agreed to turn the building of a failing, black high school in the heart of Uptown over to a new selective-admissions charter high school that had been backed by Tulane University and that reserved spaces for the qualified children of Tulane affiliates. By the fall, that high school, Lusher, was almost half white—and for some black New Orleanians, its very existence seemed to confirm the system's continuing racial stratification. Many of the state-run schools, meanwhile, appeared to be full, so students were being shunted into whatever schools had room.

As opening day—September 8—finally limped into view, the Recovery School District staff gathered in their new, thinly populated headquarters to evaluate the landscape. This was truly a rump district: there were fewer than two dozen people in the room. The assembled officials seemed to have brought with them an implicit disdain for the culture that had permeated the New Orleans school system, and a belief that they knew how to right it. Almost none of the Recovery School District staff were from the Orleans Parish school bureaucracy. This showed an understandable desire to jettison the past, but it also

Providing security: Day and Zimmermann, a Philadelphia-based corporation, and the Guidry Group, a Texas-based security consultancy. Food and custodial services: Sodexho, the food and facilities management megafirm. Real estate and finance: Alvarez and Marsal, a New York-based corporate turnaround firm that had contracts of about \$50 million to handle finances for the Orleans Parish School Board and real estate for the state. In preparation for its returning students, the city was on a war footing: National Guard units, called in to deal with high crime rates, had been ordered to be "very visible" in their Humvees outside schools, according to the Guidry Group's Michael Guidry. He promised that his beefy guys would do "really aggressive patrolling" in the schools: "Believe me," he said, "by the time we get through walking up and down the halls, they'll know who we are." The students, it seemed, had to be menaced, intimidated, tamed. Whether this was a fact or a self-fulfilling prophecy would prove hard to disentangle.

Amid all of this, students seemed of more concern for the needs they generated—books, buses, nurses—than for the minds they carried. Because there was no centralized record keeping, a child could easily fall out of the system. The presumption was that if children left a Recovery School District

school, they had gone to a charter, or an Orleans Parish school; but couldn't they just as easily have dropped out?

Jarvis deserved great credit for her openness and genuine desire to improve the schools. But even giving weight to all the post-Katrina challenges—and they were many—the planning by her and the state officials she answered to had fallen short. I feel compelled to put this on the record, only because it would be too easy to blame all of the looming chaos on Katrina, or on the problems of the past, or on the character of the children themselves.

It was easy to despair observing all this, and the schools' tumultuous first weeks wouldn't help. But these early days offered a snapshot, not a verdict. Some of the initial problems would recede. And the biggest change in New Orleans education was invisible. The system could now correct its course, whether by replacing principals or teachers (assuming, of course, replacements could be found) or closing underperforming charter schools, which face review every three years. The interim was painful to watch; after Katrina's lost year, many children would lose months more to trial and error. But the long view, at least, allowed for hope.

THE BUSINESSMAN: 'I DON'T LIKE LOOKING LIKE A JERK'

The 790 children Jim Huger had recruited for Lafayette Academy of New Orleans included Avion Williams, a twelve-year-old girl with a sweet face and long braids. She had a history with the vast brick building that housed the new charter school. It previously had been the site of plain old Lafayette Elementary School, where she, like her mother before her, had been a student. Sixty-nine percent of the school's fourth-graders had scored below "basic" in English/Language Arts on the 2005 state achievement test, and 67 percent in math—scores reflected in Avion's own sense of her educational limits. She struggled with reading, and she had never learned long division.

So from where she sat, the academy, which ran from kindergarten to seventh grade, was already an improvement in more than name. The halls had been painted, a new playground had been built, and Avion had art and music for the first time. She also had a science and math teacher, Ronald Finley, who both pushed and taught her. "He wants us to get our education and do something," she said when we met in October. I had found Avion sweeping Mr. Finley's classroom with a friend—his effort to teach them "consequences and repercussions" for talking during class. They seemed to relish the discipline. Their beef, in fact, was with other teachers at the school who did not impose it.

That Avion was so impressed by Lafayette Academy reflected a low baseline more than the new school's high achievement, a truth Huger was the first to acknowledge. At the August open house, he had warned parents that the start would be chaotic, and he had been right. As in many

of the reopened schools, books had arrived late or not at all. As of mid-October, the school had no copy machine, a crippling impediment for teachers. "Quite honestly, you have an administration that has got so many balls in the air that education really isn't [at the] forefront right now," Huger conceded. He felt the school was 30 percent of what it needed to be, and his board—composed largely of like-minded businesspeople and lawyers—was growing impatient. As he saw it, his school administrators were passive: they had been bred in large systems where they had neither full responsibility nor accountability. He wanted them to operate with the aggressiveness of entrepreneurs starting a new business. Their mentality, he asserted, was "It'll show up." My mentality is 'I want it to show up tomorrow.'

But human capital, on many levels, was complicating Huger's experiment. Brand-new, and filled with children from across the city, Lafayette Academy had neither history nor community to draw on. The principal seemed unhappy, the chief administrative officer tentative, and the lines of authority between them unclear. Two teachers had already quit by mid-October. And on the third floor, home to the unruly sixth and seventh grades, staff morale was sagging. The older children had come up through a school system that combined social promotion with an absence of socialization. Some of their teachers, in turn, had little or no urban teaching experience. The result was an endless clash of wills between students and staff, and what teachers described as a profound lack of respect. Nothing worked—not lectures, not phone calls to parents (themselves often indifferent), not detention.

The students "don't care if they fail," said one teacher, who didn't want to be named for fear of alienating parents. "You put in a twelve-hour day, every day, and feel like you just wasted twelve hours. They're great kids and they're smart—they just can't close their mouths."

With three years of teaching overseas, Trent Browne, thirty-two, considered himself an experienced teacher. In the school's opening weeks, he had been moved from one subject to another, and from one grade to another, finally landing in seventh-grade science. The day I visited, his class was muddling through safety instructions for lab work. A voice over the intercom kept interrupting to request a custodian for the third-floor girls' bathroom, where crude graffiti scaled the wall. In subsequent classes, the noise level in Browne's room was even higher: he was ordering students to write essays for being disrespectful. That afternoon, he quit, reaching his breaking point as he and another teacher struggled to get forty defiant students out of the cafeteria. "I'm here to teach, not be a babysitter," he told me. (When I returned to Lafayette the next day, his class didn't need one: the students were raptly watching *Akeelah and the Bee*.)

Across the hall, meanwhile, another teacher was near tears. A twenty-two-year-old novice trained by Teach

for America, she was struggling to control her seventh-graders. She tried a level classroom tone. They talked over her. She raised her voice: "This needs to stop! It stops now! You are in a classroom, children. You are not on the street; you are not even in your mother's house. You are in a classroom. THIS. STOPS. NOW."

In the way the newer teachers spoke about the students, their jobs, the school, there was a sourness—as if in just six weeks their spirits had curdled. They thought the school had not been ready to open, and they felt the students sensed that. They did not have aides in their classrooms or help for children with special needs—or even records of which children had special needs, since so many records had been lost in Katrina. The school had no counselor or social worker. The teachers felt the administration had no strategies to help them, other than to imply their incompetence. And Huger, they said, had called them whiners.

Huger was open about his intolerance for whining. At a meeting, a teacher had stood up and spoken with a "very bad attitude," he recalled. He said he had conveyed this message to the teachers: "Just to remind you: I'm not getting paid for this. You need to have a better attitude. We are doing everything we can to make a good school. It's not going to happen overnight. All this entitlement and whining about things we can't control is just not going to get us there. We are committed to a cause and we are going to give you the tools to do your job. If you believe that, stick with us. If you don't believe that, you shouldn't be here." That quieted people down quite a bit, he said.

He was unabashed about riding his employees hard. "The word I'm getting is that we probably have 60 percent great teachers, and some deadwood," he said. He believed "force of personality" made first-class organizations, and he meant to apply it: "We are going to push and push and push until we run a first-class school," he said.

"There's a big consequence to the failure of this school," he added: "I will look like a jerk. And I don't like looking like a jerk."

Although Huger had been convinced that choice would produce great schools, a quick scan of educational literature suggested choice would not be enough. National surveys on charter-school performance were all over the map—reflecting both the ideologies of the surveyors and the actual wide range in performance. In Detroit, the public schools had lost 40 percent of their students since the late 1990s, in significant part to charter schools, showing that parents would indeed vote with their feet. But the school board there had responded to the pressure with a \$500,000 marketing campaign to lure students back to public schools—hardly the sort of educational improvement that competition from charters is supposed to foster. In Washington, D.C., meanwhile, another charter hub, the latest numbers showed that only four of thirty-four charter schools had met academic benchmarks. And in Philadelphia, the most recent data

showed schools run by educational management companies—which Huger saw as the best bet when run in partnership with local nonprofits like his—lagging behind public schools in improving performance. It was possible, in short, to leave one failure for another.

Huger agreed, but argued that his school, with its own board members walking the halls and demanding accountability, had a better chance of succeeding than a school in a centralized system. He planned to scrutinize test scores, interview parents, teachers, and students—whatever it took to produce satisfied customers. This model—of a businessman driving for higher returns—was not the one used by most of the country's more successful charter schools; they had been created by educators with a vision of how to achieve greatness, not just demand it. Time would tell whether Huger's way could work too. As he put it, the real test was not this year's seventh-graders, but what kind of seventh-graders the students now in kindergarten would turn out to be.

But the inevitable churning in between would not be cost-free. The upheaval of this fresh start denied hurricane-buffed children the stability that they needed. Trent Browne, the teacher who quit while I was visiting the school, had tried to teach his students about the scientific method: doing X would result in Y. Now, with their behavior prompting his departure, they had a living example. "That was perhaps one of the best lessons I taught," Browne told me. "I said goodbye."

But his goodbye had imparted another lesson to the children he left behind: that they shouldn't hold anything too dear. Mr. Browne's departure had created a hole in seventh-grade science, and Avion Williams's beloved Mr. Finley was moved from her sixth-grade class to fill it.

THE OUTSIDERS: 'BIG EASY BEHAVIOR'

For the students of Sarah T. Reed High School in New Orleans East, the first day back on their own campus in mid-October began with a security protocol more thorough than any American airport's. Uniformed security guards barked orders for students to remove earrings and belts before passing through metal detectors. The guards poked through bags and patted students down. They confiscated belt buckles over a certain size (they could be used to hit someone in a fight), sending boys down the halls clutching their pants. And they took chips and chocolate: Daniel Hudson, the principal, had ordered the guards to seize junk food, in part because African American teenagers were so at risk for obesity and diabetes.

Few schools so clearly revealed the early shortfalls of the Recovery School District and the difficulty of reviving and remaking a school system in a broken city. Six weeks into the school year, Reed, which was not a charter school but rather was being run directly by the state, was

just returning to its campus in New Orleans East; it had spent the interim sharing the campus of another school across the city. Neither the auditorium nor the gymnasium could be used because of continuing repairs. The school had no computers and no telephones, meaning Hudson had to do all school business through his cell phone. He had no assistant principal. And there were no extracurricular activities.

With dozens of security guards—some of them barely out of high school themselves—and two police officers patrolling Reed's halls, the guard-to-student ratio was as high as the teacher-to-student ratio. The city's public-school culture, as articulated to me by Kenneth Jackson, the school's stately "in-school suspension officer," was that students needed something, or someone, to fear, "because they have gotten away with a whole lot."

When I first met Hudson, he said he had been taking a year off, but had not mentioned why. A Google search soon explained: After stints in Virginia and Pennsylvania, he had been hired, in 2004, as the principal of Ballou High, the second-largest high school in Washington, D.C., and among the worst-performing. There, according to generally sympathetic press accounts, he had clashed with administrators, teachers, and students who resented his attempts to enforce rules and decorum. In June of 2005—three months before Katrina hit New Orleans—the superintendent, who had refused for the entire year to meet with Hudson, fired him.

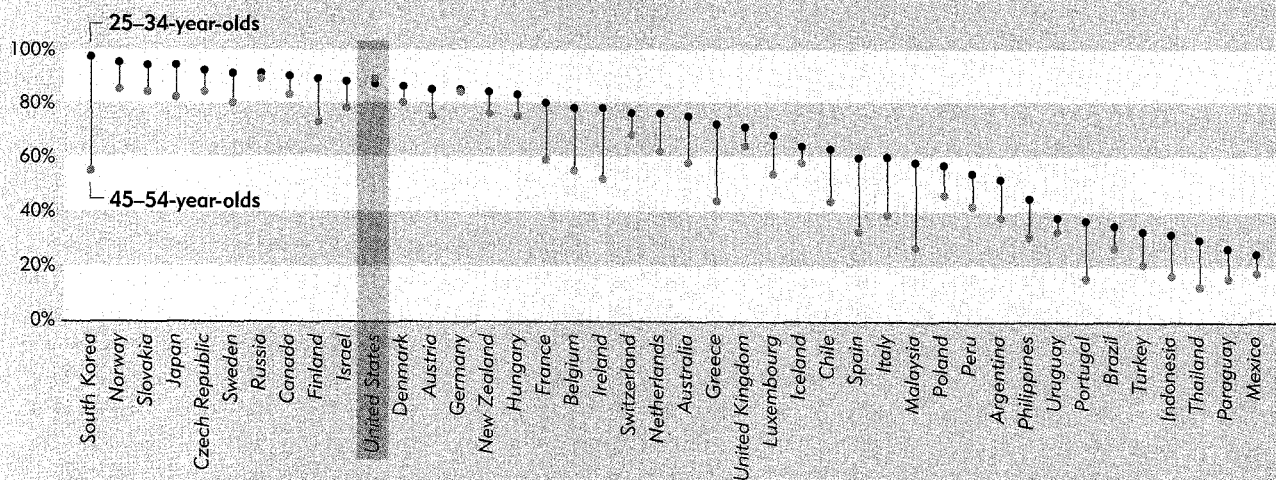
Now here he was, once again facing a resistant culture—and to my surprise, given the accounts of Ballou, he called New Orleans "very unorganized" in comparison. Unruliness ruled the halls, despite Hudson's bellowing efforts to police them. Several students he confronted for lingering in the halls could not remember the name of their teachers for that period, or even the subject. Hudson had idealized New Orleans since a visit fifteen years earlier, but as a principal, he had run headlong into a culture that was the city's curse as well as its charm. He called it "Big Easy behavior," as in "We always are all late." He was determined to challenge that attitude, but one mother warned that "laissez faire" would not yield easily: "It's part of our culture, just as sure as there are red beans and rice on Monday and seafood every Friday," she told him. She was one of about thirty-five parents—out of a student body that ought to have yielded ten times that—who had shown up for Reed's parents' night.

Hudson was determined to break down students who defied authority. He got on the intercom to remind them that Reed was a school, "not a mall." He told one sixteen-year-old who had threatened a teacher, "No teacher in this building is going to punk out for any student here. I am not going to punk out for any student here. I have too many kids like you who think they can say and do anything they want." He tried telling the same sixteen-year-old about his own upbringing as one of eight children of a single mother who swept floors for doctors and lawyers,

STATE OF EDUCATION MAKING IT UP IN VOLUME?

While students in Europe have consistently outperformed their American counterparts on standardized tests, the U.S. has historically at least partly made up for its undistinguished marks by keeping more students in school longer. But international high-school completion rates have climbed, and the U.S. rate has stagnated—leaving concerns over whether American schools can continue to make up in quantity what they lack in quality.

Percentage of the population with at least a high-school diploma, 2002–03



SOURCE: OECD

how he had been pulled up by football. But it seemed to make no impression on the young man. I couldn't tell whether it was because the student was already too far gone, or because Hudson was so busy talking, and yelling, that he had forgotten how to listen.

Students watched Hudson and shook their heads, as if sure he would run aground on his own determination. "He tries, but it ain't really working, what he's trying to do," said a student named Laura Hurst, who was sitting glumly in the cafeteria, boycotting lunch, like most of her classmates, because the food was frozen. "They're still going to do what they want to do."

As Hudson himself knew well, the time he spent in the halls, the endless meetings with parents, meant he knew little of what was happening in the classroom. What was clear, in the time I spent in classes, was how little of the training Jarvis had mandated for teachers seemed to have taken. In algebra, I watched students spend the whole class copying problems out of the textbook, as if graphic endeavor alone could transmit mathematical understanding. In another math class, a first-year teacher, straight out of college, ignored a girl standing and braiding a boy's hair. In "Freshman Orientation," a new course that had been created with no curriculum, the teacher had received no training at all, since she'd had only about eight hours' notice that she had a job. She was a legal secretary whose only real teaching experience had come years before when she received her certification. Her ninth-graders mocked, disobeyed, and mostly just disregarded her.

Walking Reed's halls with Jackson, the suspension officer, I had heard him say of two different students that they weren't going to "make it." Some kids, he explained when I asked about this, were "doomed." "They don't have right in them," he said. Jackson said he always offered second chances. But if students didn't take them, he believed in just waiting for them to mess up enough times to get themselves expelled—and out of the way of the kids who wanted to learn.

I admired Jackson's efforts to shield those students who did want to learn, who tried to avoid the chaos by sitting at the front of their classes or walking away from fights. But as for the other students, I wasn't so sure about predestination as an educational philosophy. Had God truly happened to concentrate so many bad seeds in poor, black New Orleans—or had there been a moment, earlier in their lives, when the right school could have provided salvation?

THE LOCAL:

'EVERYBODY WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE ME'

"Peace" had been the first unit, for every grade, at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary in the Lower Ninth Ward, initiating new students into the school culture, and reinforcing it for older ones. That culture was one of respect and civic comportment. To create it, the school taught anger management and conflict resolution—key skills for children from families and neighborhoods where volatility was often the norm.

When King finally opened as a charter, on September 18, it faced, like other schools, the challenges of operating in a building not quite ready, and of having to manage everything on its own. But the school, now with students from prekindergarten through eighth grade, was functioning reasonably well and starting

to appreciate the benefits of being a charter. Principal Roché-Hicks could deploy teachers as she wanted, and the school hired and monitored its own custodians.

The greatest challenge, instead, came from an unexpected direction: about 180 of the 430 students were new to King and its culture. Compared with other schools I had seen, there was remarkable order. But as Sheila Seals, the school's longtime social worker, visited classrooms, she noticed that when classes were disrupted, it was by students who were new to King, and the few major incidents had also been caused by new students. The school was having to indoctrinate a whole new group of



THE SOCIAL WORKER Sheila Seals

children into its ways—to knit a new community. Seals saw the King kids applying positive peer pressure to behave. That, she thought, along with the ambience of their aspirations, was slowly working on the new students.

The culture I observed at King was the opposite of Reed's, in that King believed public-school children should be inspired and taught to be their best, rather than cowed into not doing their worst. This difference arose partly from the students' ages—by high school, a hardness had set in on both sides; in childhood, change and redemption came easier—but even more from philosophy. Perhaps Roché-Hicks had more to teach many of the new and reconstituted schools than all of the outside experts who had poured into New Orleans. More was at stake in this educational experiment than a chance for reformers nationwide to see what worked. Without a better-educated populace, New Orleans would sink further into the metaphorical swamp, as it had been doing slowly before Katrina, and dramatically thereafter. New Orleans could

no longer afford to write off its children—and King, in particular, and the story of one of its students, suggested it didn't need to.

Not long after beginning sixth grade at King this fall, Trinesha Torregano stepped off the school bus and into a fight with her cousin. Neither the feud—the two girls had barely spoken in two years—nor the behavior was new. The twelve-year-old had a slicked-back ponytail, a love of double Dutch, and a short fuse—Trinesha guessed she had been suspended five times at her pre-Katrina school, a place where the teachers yelled, the students behaved “like animals,” and everyone fought. Such behavior was not acceptable at King, and Trinesha faced a choice. Roché-Hicks had suspended her for three days, and put it to her plainly: relinquish the feud or leave the school. Trinesha was just stubborn enough to contemplate giving up one of the few good things to come out of Katrina.

Trinesha's post-hurricane odyssey had been typically epic. She had swum, then, with her mother and little brother, boated through the floodwaters, spent four days on the St. Bernard bridge, eating military rations, then been bused to the Astrodome, in Houston. Eventually her grandmother had collected them, and they had stayed in Houston for the year. Katrina had ruined the family's Eighth Ward home, and when Trinesha returned from Houston last summer she moved—along with six family members—into a trailer nearby. The loss of a hard-won house, the experience of begging FEMA for a trailer, stung. “After Katrina, I felt like I was poor,” she said, obsidian eyes burning.

Her school in Houston—where she could talk to the teachers and made some academic progress—had been her first glimpse of a different kind of education. King was her second glimpse. The post-Katrina decision to eliminate zoned schools had opened King up to her, and she had told her grandmother that was the school she wanted. But having made that choice, Trinesha now confronted another in Roché-Hicks's ultimatum.

In her few weeks at King, Trinesha had made certain observations. The teachers did not yell. The children were well-behaved. She could talk to Ms. Roché-Hicks and Ms. Seals. And then there was her return from suspension: “I came back, and everybody was so happy to see me. And they was talking to me. And the teachers keep on saying, ‘Oh you're back, oh you're back.’ And that's what I liked—that they gave me support. And they showed me attention.”

She decided to stay. Support and attention—it had not taken much to turn Trinesha Torregano around. “After I pass to the seventh grade, I'm gonna know things that I didn't never knew before,” she explained.

From the moment Trinesha made her decision, Seals, the social worker, had noticed a change: Trinesha smiled more, she behaved better. And even as the families insisted that the cousins would never get along, the school had placed them in the same classroom to force a rapprochement. The girls were speaking again; teachers spotted them sharing food at lunch. “It's kind of fun talking to her,” Trinesha admitted.

Trinesha's hold on King was still tentative. When she and I spoke in mid-October, her aunt and grandfather were talking of returning to Houston. And like many post-

Katrina children in New Orleans, she was living without her parents: she had never met her father, and at that time her mother was still in Houston, for reasons the girl could not explain. This subject sent tears streaming down her cheeks. On the phone, her mother had warned her that if she got in trouble again, she would have to get on a bus for Houston. As much as Trinesha loved King, this threat held a certain attraction. Even as she retained a child's wonderment, her hold on childhood was tenuous. She was being raised among women, her own mother among them, who had given birth as teenagers. King channeled her away from such likelihoods, and toward new possibilities.

By turning her away from fights and

suspensions, the school was also shielding her from a judgment, down the road, that she was not going to “make it.” “There's just a lot of stuff I want to do!” she told me. “I want to be a pediatrician, and then I want to be a teacher. I want to go to Florida. Have you been to Florida? Disney World out there? I want to go to Washington, D.C., for Christmas so I could see how it would really snow.”

Trinesha's trailer in the Eighth Ward sits just a stone's throw from the train tracks. When the trains rush by, horns bleating, the trailer shakes, as if to remind her how fragile her world is. Each day, she steps out of her straitened home into desolation: abandoned houses, piles of debris, a wind with more urgency than her city's resurrection. School is her haven, where the world holds steady, and this is as it should be. When I last saw her, at 7:10 on a frigid Friday morning, she was climbing out of the cold and onto her school bus, wearing her school uniform, a pink princess backpack, and a smile. ▀

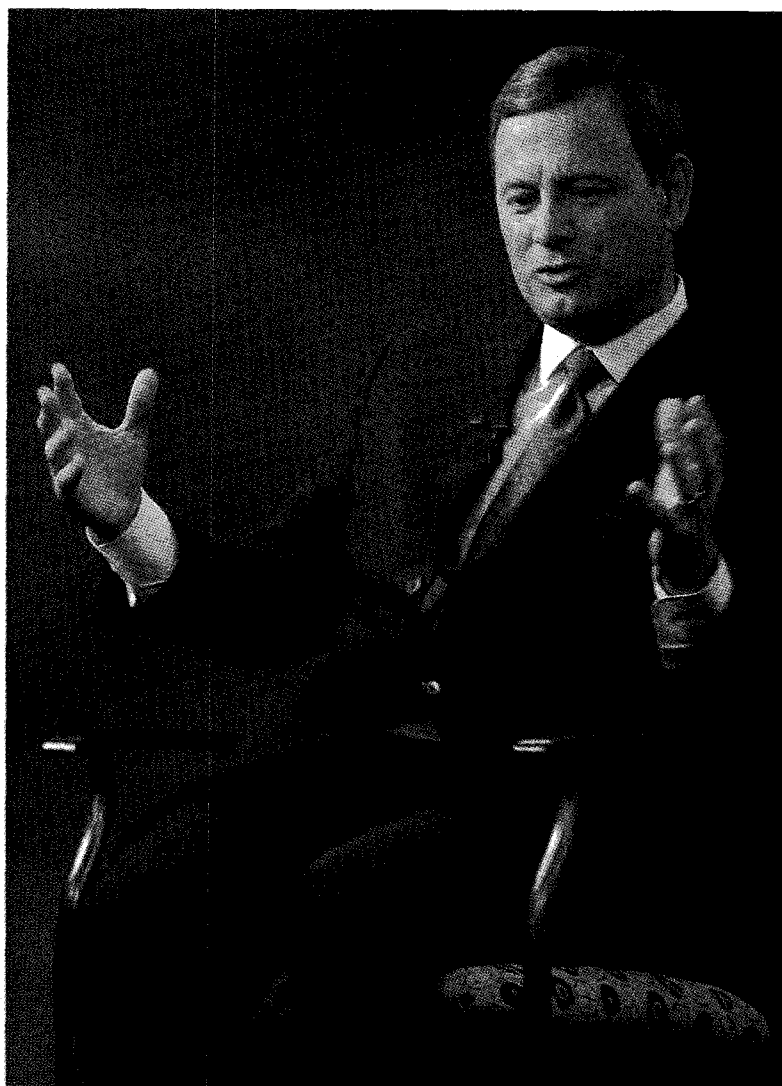
Amy Waldman is an Atlantic national correspondent.



THE STUDENT Trinesha Torregano

In an exclusive interview, Chief Justice John Roberts says that if the Supreme Court is to maintain legitimacy, its justices must start acting more like colleagues and less like prima donnas.

BY JEFFREY ROSEN



JOHN ROBERTS at the University of Miami last November

Roberts's Rules

Last July, I went to the Supreme Court to interview John G. Roberts Jr., who had just completed his first term as chief justice of the United States. I was finishing a book about judicial temperament, and Roberts, who is a keen student of constitutional history, had agreed to share some thoughts on the subject. I had interviewed Roberts once before, when his nomination to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit was stalled in the Senate, but I had not talked to him since he became chief justice and was eager to hear his thoughts about the new job.

The chief justice's chambers are impressive without being showy. They include a paneled waiting room, the

private conference room in which all nine justices meet to discuss cases after oral arguments, and a cozy inner office with fading photographs—hung by the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist in the 1980s—that Roberts hadn't yet bothered to replace. In shirtsleeves and a tie, Roberts invited me to take off my jacket and have a seat in his office, on a nineteenth-century couch that, according to Court lore, is the one on which John Quincy Adams expired in the House of Representatives.

Before long, the conversation turned to judicial disappointments. "It's sobering to think of the seventeen chief justices; certainly a solid majority of them have to be characterized as failures," Roberts said with a rueful smile.

JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES

"The successful ones are hard to number." I asked him to elaborate: Why had so many chief justices been failures? Partly, Roberts explained, it was because the powers of the office are not extensive. "A chief justice's authority is really quite limited, and the dynamic among all the justices is going to affect whether he can accomplish much or not," he said. "There is this convention of referring to the Taney Court, the Marshall Court, the Fuller Court, but a chief justice has the same vote that everyone else has." As a result, "the chief's ability to get the Court to do something is really quite restrained."

Some of the least successful chief justices, Roberts suggested, had faltered because they misunderstood the job, approaching it as law professors rather than as leaders of a collegial Court. Harlan Fiske Stone, a former dean of Columbia Law School, was a case in point. Stone "was a failure as chief, because of his misperception of what a chief justice is supposed to be," Roberts said, gesturing to the justices' private conference room through an open door of his office. "It's his desk out there that is separate from the conference table, and he ... sat at his desk, and the others were at the table, and he almost called on them and critiqued their performances. They hated that." Roberts laughed. "As a result, he was a failure as a chief justice."

In Roberts's view, the most successful chief justices help their colleagues speak with one voice. Unanimous, or nearly unanimous, decisions are hard to overturn and contribute to the stability of the law and the continuity of the Court; by contrast, closely divided, 5-4 decisions make it harder for the public to respect the Court as an impartial institution that transcends partisan politics.

Roberts suggested that the temperament of a chief justice can be as important as judicial philosophy in determining his success or failure. And based on the impression he made in his first year on the Court and throughout his career, Roberts seems to have many of the personal gifts and talents of the most successful and politically savvy chief justices, such as Rehnquist and John Marshall, rather than those of a heavy-handed academic like Stone.

As one of the leading Supreme Court advocates of his generation, Roberts appeared before the Court many times, representing clients on both sides of the political spectrum and earning a reputation for fair-mindedness. He was widely respected as a legal craftsman who came to cases without preconceived grand theories, but instead took positions based on the arguments and legal materials in each case. Personally as well as jurisprudentially modest, Roberts prefers baseball analogies to showy displays of his formidable intellect, and he treats litigants with evenhanded courtesy. He sends gifts to acquaintances who have newborn children, or notes to those whose family members are ill. Despite the daunting

administrative and social demands of being chief justice, Roberts, who turns fifty-two this year, has tried to maintain a balanced life. Most nights, he is home for dinner with his wife, Jane Sullivan Roberts, and two young children, Josephine and Jack; he plays with the kids until their 8:30 p.m. bedtime, and then works for a few hours before going to sleep. Because of his personal thoughtfulness and sense of proportion, it's easy when talking to him to forget that he is the chief justice of the United States.

When I met with Roberts, the question of judicial temperament was much on his mind, since he had made it a priority of his first term to promote unanimity and collegiality on the Court. He was surprisingly successful in this goal: under his leadership, the Court issued more consecutive unanimous opinions than at any other time in recent history. But the term ended in what Justice John Paul Stevens called a "cacophony" of discordant voices. Opposing justices addressed each other in unusually personal terms and generated a flurry of stories in the media about the divisions on the Court, especially in cases involving terrorism, the death penalty, and gerrymandering. Roberts seemed frustrated by the degree to which the media focused on the handful of divisive cases rather than on the greater number of unanimous ones, and also by the degree to which some of his colleagues were acting more like law professors than members of a collegial Court. As a result, Roberts looked to the example of his greatest predecessor—Marshall, who served as chief justice from 1801 to 1835—for a model of how to rein in a group of unruly prima donnas.

"If the Court in Marshall's era had issued decisions in important cases the way this Court has over the past thirty years, we would not have a Supreme Court today of the sort that we have," he said. "That suggests that what the Court's been doing over the past thirty years has been eroding, to some extent, the capital that Marshall built up." Roberts added, "I think the Court is also ripe for a similar refocus on functioning as an institution, because if it doesn't it's going to lose its credibility and legitimacy as an institution."

In particular, Roberts declared, he would make it his priority, as Marshall did, to discourage his colleagues from issuing separate opinions. "I think that every justice should be worried about the Court acting as a Court and functioning as a Court, and they should all be worried, when they're writing separately, about the effect on the Court as an institution."

In Roberts's view, Marshall's success in unifying the Court was a reflection of his temperament. "He gave everyone the benefit of the doubt; he approached everyone as a friend. The assumption was ... 'This is someone I'm going

to like unless proven otherwise,” Roberts said. “He was convivial, he took great pride in sharing his Madeira with his colleagues ... [He was not] the artificial glad-hander type; it was just in his nature to get along with people. I think that had to play an important role in his ability to bring the Court together, to change the whole way judicial decisions were arrived at, to really create the notion that we are a Court—not simply an assemblage of individual justices ... It was the force of his personality. That lack of pretense, that openness and general trustworthiness, were very important personality traits in Marshall’s success,” Roberts observed.

I asked Roberts to contrast Marshall’s temperament with that of Thomas Jefferson, his archrival. “Jefferson certainly did not have the common touch,” he emphasized. “To some extent, maybe affected, and perhaps I’m being unfair to Jefferson but [he had] more of almost like a philosophe’s attachment to the ideas.” Roberts

lot of concurring opinions. There weren’t a lot of dissents. And nowadays, you take a look at some of our opinions and you wonder if we’re reverting back to the English model, where everybody has to have their say. It’s more being concerned with the jurisprudence of the individual rather than working toward a jurisprudence of the Court.” Roberts praised justices who were willing to put the good of the Court above their own ideological agendas. “A justice is not like a law professor, who might say, ‘This is my theory ... and this is what I’m going to be faithful to and consistent with,’ and in twenty years will look back and say, ‘I had a consistent theory of the First Amendment as applied to a particular area,’” he explained. Instead of nine justices moving in nine separate directions, Roberts said, “it would be good to have a commitment on the part of the Court to acting as a Court, rather than being more concerned about the consistency and coherency of an individual judicial record.”

“It’s sobering to think of the seventeen chief justices; certainly a solid majority of them have to be characterized as failures,” Roberts said with a rueful smile.

shook his head. “When you look at [Jefferson] side by side with Marshall, Marshall comes across as a more substantial character, certainly more likable. Yes, I think they’d both invite you to share their table and pour you a drink, but you kind of think you’d have a very academic discussion with Jefferson, and you’d have a good time with Marshall.”

Roberts believes that Marshall’s temperament and worldview came from his experiences as a soldier at Valley Forge, where he developed a commitment to the success of the nation. “Some have speculated that the real root of Marshall’s ill feeling to Jefferson was that Jefferson was not at Valley Forge, was not in the fight, and had what Marshall might regard as a somewhat precious attachment to ideas for the sake of ideas, while Marshall was more personally invested in the success of the American experiment.”

Roberts decided early in his first term to embrace Marshall as a model. “Once you’re here you don’t immediately think you’ve got to be like Oliver Ellsworth,” he said, laughing. (Ellsworth, the chief justice from 1796 to 1800, was one of Marshall’s obscure and forgotten predecessors.) If you want to become “a competitive bicyclist, you’re going to wonder how Lance Armstrong did it—you’re not going to pick somebody else.”

Roberts said his decision to embrace Marshall’s vision was a reaction to “the personalization of judicial politics.” During Marshall’s thirty years as chief, “there weren’t a

Despite his concern about separate opinions, Roberts was proud of his relative success in encouraging unanimity, especially in less visible cases. He seemed especially frustrated, therefore, by the media’s focus on the number of high-profile 5–4 decisions and the shifting coalitions that had determined them. “There was a question from one of these [tour] groups that come in here: ‘How do you decide who’s going to be the swing vote?’” Roberts laughed and shook his head. “I don’t know, we rotate. That has to undermine—that’s a steady wasting away of the notion of the rule of law, a personalization of it.” He acknowledged that he was “kind of put out” by some of the media emphasis on divisions on the Court. “We had more unanimous opinions announced in a row than ever before ... in the modern era ... but in the first 5–4 decision, people are writing, ‘So much for unanimity.’” Roberts said it was a bad thing that, at the end of each term, commentators published graphs and charts about who on the Court agreed most often with whom [for an example, see opposite page]. “It is such an egotistical analysis of the Court,” he lamented. “The whole notion that it’s functioning as a Court doesn’t seem to appeal to anyone ... I think it’s bad, long-term, if people identify the rule of law with how individual justices vote.”

Promoting unanimity will not be an easy task, Roberts acknowledged, after years of “the personalization of judicial politics.” He said that he had to emphasize the benefits of unanimity for individual justices, in order

to influence what he called the “team dynamic.” “You do have to [help people] appreciate, from their own point of view, having the Court acquire more legitimacy, credibility; [show them] that they will benefit, from the shared commitment to unanimity, in a way that they wouldn’t otherwise,” he said. Roberts added that in some ways he considered his situation—overseeing a Court that is evenly divided on important issues—to be ideal. “You do need some fluidity in the middle, [if you are going] to develop a commitment to a different way of deciding things.” In other words, on a divided Court where neither camp can be confident that it will win in the most controversial cases, both sides have an incentive to work toward unanimity, to achieve a kind of bilateral disarmament.

Marshall’s example had taught him, Roberts said, that personal trust in the chief justice’s lack of an ideological agenda was very important, and Marshall’s ability to win this kind of trust inspired him. “If I’m sitting there telling people, ‘We should decide the case on this basis,’ and if [other justices] think, ‘That’s just Roberts trying to push some agenda again,’ they’re not likely to listen very often,”

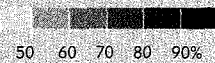
he observed. “Marshall could easily have got on the Court and said, ‘I’m the last hope of the Federalists—we’re out of Congress, we’re out of the White House—and I’m going to pursue that agenda here.’ And he would have not only damaged the Court but could have smothered it in the cradle. But instead he said, ‘No, this is my home now, this is the Court, and we’re going to operate as a Court, and that’s important to me,’ and as a result he made the Court the institution that it has become.”

People naturally tend to focus on the controversial cases, but Roberts says he has tried to promote unanimity in less high-profile cases, too. “It’s not just on the tough cases. And it’s easier to do it if you get into the habit of doing it as a matter of routine.” In the less visible cases of the term, he says, he has tried to develop “a culture and an ethos that says ‘It’s good when we’re all together.’” He added that even smaller cases can provoke fierce initial disagreements. “Just because a case ends up unanimous doesn’t mean that’s how it started,” he emphasized. “The vote may be divided in conference, and yet if you think it’s valuable to have consensus on it,

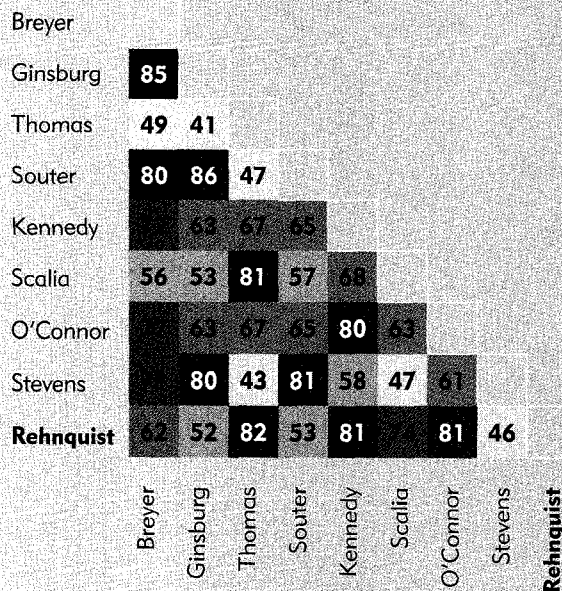
STATE OF THE COURT

GETTING TO YES

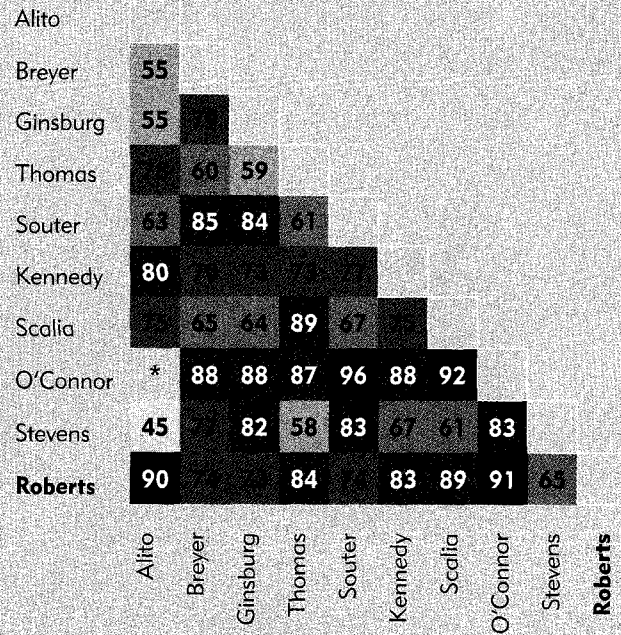
The Supreme Court has exhibited a high degree of consensus under John Roberts. Fifty-four percent of signed decisions in the first year of the Roberts Court were unanimous—a much higher rate than the norm for the last decade. The graphic shows the percentage of written Court opinions on which each pair of justices agreed with one another.



Rehnquist Court (2004 term)



Roberts Court (2005 term)



*Alito was confirmed on January 31, 2006, to replace the retiring O'Connor.



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Roberts said he intended to use his power to achieve as broad a consensus as possible. "It's not my greatest power; it's my only power," he laughed. "Say someone is committed to broad consensus, and somebody else is just dead set on 'My way or the highway. And I've got five votes, and that's all I need.' Well, you assign that [case] to the [consensus-minded] person, and it gives you a much better chance, out of the box, of getting some kind of consensus." He acknowledged that this approach might be perceived on the Court as a more controversial use of the assignment power than Chief Justice Rehnquist's stated policy of punishing only those justices who were slow in producing opinions. Roberts's colleagues were likely to understand a neutral policy that denied them new assignments when they were late with opinions, he said, but they might well object if they felt that he was giving the plum assignments to those justices who agreed with him. Roberts wanted to make clear that he would instead reward those who write

that his father, an executive at Bethlehem Steel, "was most known for his willingness to work with unions, at a time [when] there was a lot of enmity ... between management and the unions." John Roberts Sr., his son recalled, would "show up unexpectedly at the union hall, buy a round of drinks for the people in the union." In the 1960s and '70s, when the Japanese were the great economic threat to the steel industry, Roberts's father insisted that union leaders accompany management executives on a trip to Japan, so that both sides could personally evaluate the competition. "I would say that's a general view of bringing a broader degree of consensus ... than his peers might have adopted," Roberts said.

In high school at La Lumiere, a Catholic boarding school in La Porte, Indiana, John Roberts Jr. was known for his leadership skills—he was captain of the football team—and for his academic ability, which he cultivated with a light touch. His elementary-school principal, in an interview with *The Christian Science Monitor*, recalled that Roberts was "an outstanding student, but very

Roberts declared that to combat "the personalization of judicial politics," he would make it his priority to discourage his colleagues from issuing separate opinions.

opinions in ways that might attract more votes, regardless of their ideological orientation.

Rehnquist was famous for running a briskly efficient conference, but Roberts said that his own vision of unanimity sometimes requires longer discussions. "There's a lot less flexibility once something is in writing," he said. According to tradition, each justice speaks once, in order of seniority, before anyone can speak for the second time, but as the moderator, Roberts can shape the discussion by the way he frames the issues in a case, inviting responses to particular points. He finds that the hardest work he does is deciding "how you present a case and what you say it's about," he said. "I have a short amount of time, for sometimes very tough cases, to figure out how to present this that will make it most useful to the conference." To encourage consensus, Roberts often tries to define the principle in question as narrowly as possible. "In most cases, I think the narrower the better, because people will be less concerned about it," he said.

John Marshall's experiences as the oldest of fifteen unruly siblings may have had something to do with his penchant for winning unity and consensus. I asked Roberts whether anything in his own background would account for his interest in bringing people together. He said he hadn't thought about it before, but he recalled

quiet, low-key, never lorded his intelligence over others." Roberts downplayed the idea that he learned leadership skills in elementary or high school: "It's kind of an unusual situation, where there are twenty-five people in the class," he said modestly. He acknowledges that his undergraduate thesis at Harvard about the failure of the British Liberal Party in the Edwardian era may have reflected his early suspicion of the politics of personality. "My central thesis with respect to the Liberal Party was that they made a fatal mistake in investing too heavily in the personalities of Lloyd George and Churchill, as opposed to adopting a more broad-based reaction to the rise of Labour; that they were steadily fixated on the personalities." But Roberts insisted that his most formative experiences were as a Supreme Court advocate and as an appellate judge.

"You're always trying to persuade people, obviously, as an advocate," he said. "And I do find, I did find, that you can be generally more successful in persuading people, in arguing a case [when you] go in with something that you think has the possibility of getting seven votes rather than five. You don't like going in thinking, 'Here's my pitch, and I'm honing it to get five votes.' That's a risky strategy," he said with a laugh. As an advocate, Roberts prided himself on having represented both sides of an issue—liberal and conservative, government and industry—

and this increased his belief in the importance of a bipartisan vision of law. "I do think it's extremely valuable for people to be on both sides, and I mean being in private practice and being in government, arguing against the government and for the government," he said. "It does give you a perspective that you just can't get any other way, in terms of what the concerns of the other side really are. And it also gives you an added credibility, and that's very, very important."

The most important source of his decision to resurrect Marshall's vision of unanimity, Roberts says, was his brief experience as an appellate judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. "For whatever reason, it is firmly embedded [in] that court that you function as a court," he said approvingly. "It is part of a pushback against the higher degree of politicization of the appointment process there." In reaction to this politicization, judges on the D.C. Circuit have agreed, in Roberts's words, "We're not politicians; we're judges, we're a court, and we're going to work real hard to be a court—partly because we don't like people thinking we're not, and partly because some of us had experience [on the court] in the bitter period where we weren't." Roberts served on the D.C. Circuit for only two years, but the experience of seeing his colleagues working to achieve consensus impressed him.

"That was my first experience as a judge, and I liked the way it worked," he said. On the D.C. Circuit, the convention was that the most-junior judge spoke first in the private conference for each three-judge panel. (On the Supreme Court, the chief speaks first.) "So I always spoke first," Roberts said with a laugh. "And what it meant was that I kind of had to be prepared, almost like law school, to state the case from the very beginning."

Roberts sounded frustrated that consensus was more elusive on the Supreme Court than on the appellate court. "It's so much harder, first of all, with nine people than with three. You sit around with three people and ask, 'Where's the common ground?' and it's easy. With nine, it's much harder. It is, whatever else, a fascinating personal psychology dynamic, to get nine different people with nine different views. It's going to take some time," he said. Some justices prefer arguments in writing, others are more receptive to personal appeals, and all react badly to heavy-handed orders. To lead such a strong-willed group requires the skills of an orchestra conductor, as Felix Frankfurter used to say—or of the extremely subtle and observant Supreme Court advocate that Roberts used to be.

Chief justices, Roberts acknowledged, are more likely to sublimate their personal views for the good of the Court

STATE OF THE COURT VITAL SIGNS

Tenure, productivity,
and dissent on the
Supreme Court



	Roberts	Stevens	Scalia	Kennedy	Souter	Thomas	Ginsburg	Breyer	Alito
Age as of January 2007	51	86	70	70	67	58	73	68	56
Years on Court	1	31	20	18	16	15	13	12	1
Opinions written per year	13*	28	26	19	18	26	17	22	9*
Average length of each opinion of the Court written (word counts, Fall 2005 term)	4,369	6,466	3,642	5,832	4,400	2,717	3,802	3,875	4,103
Dissents per year	6*	21	19	11	15	20	17	15	5*
Lone dissenting votes cast, last five years	0	10	4	1	1	6	0	2	0

Per-year statistics are averages over the past five years, unless otherwise noted.

* Fall 2005 term only

ALL PHOTOS FROM COLLECTION, THE SUPREME COURT HISTORICAL SOCIETY. ROBERTS, GINSBURG, BREYER, AND ALITO BY STEVE PETTEWAY; STEVENS AND SOUTER BY JOSEPH H. BAILEY; SCALIA BY MOLLIE ISAACS; KENNEDY BY ROBIN REID; THOMAS BY HUGH TALMAN.

than associate justices are; he cited the example of his former boss, William Rehnquist, for whom he clerked. "I think there's no doubt that he changed, as associate justice and chief; he became naturally more concerned about the function of the institution," Roberts said, pointing out that though Rehnquist had previously opposed the *Miranda v. Arizona* decision of 1966, which required the police to read suspects their rights, he wrote the opinion upholding *Miranda* in 2000. "He appreciated that it had become part of the law—that it would do more harm to uproot it—and he wrote that opinion as chief for the good of the institution."

Another reason for Rehnquist's success as a chief justice, Roberts said, was his temperament—namely, that he knew who he was and had no inclination to change his views simply to court popularity. "That Scandinavian austerity and sense of fate and complication," as Roberts put it, were important parts of Rehnquist's character, as was his Lutheran faith. "It's a significant and purposeful mode of worship to get up in the morning to do your job

the government is not going to polarize completely. It's a high priority to keep any kind of partisan divide out of the judiciary as well."

Roberts recognizes that much of his success or failure will be determined by his colleagues, and their readiness to embrace his vision of consensus and political neutrality. During his first term, he was surprised to find some justices talking openly about how to protect the legitimacy of the Court. His colleagues "are concerned about having new justices on the Court," he said, and "don't want the Court to seem to be lurching around because of changes in personnel." And he felt that his success in achieving an unusually high number of unanimous opinions was due to the other justices' eagerness to be helpful to a newcomer, much like a fiancé meeting his in-laws for the first time at Thanksgiving. "I do think people were being particularly helpful and accommodating in the first term," he said. "Maybe they won't feel the same way the second. We'll see."

Roberts declined to criticize his colleagues by name. But when he objected to justices who act like unruly law professors, it was hard not to think of Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia.

as best you can, to go to bed at night and not to worry too much about whether the best that you can do is good enough or not. And he didn't: once a case was decided, it was decided, and if every editorial page in the country was going to trash it, he didn't care." Roberts said he associated Rehnquist with a certain midwestern stubbornness. "Anyone who clerked for him was familiar with him intoning the phrase, 'Well, I'm just not going to do it.'" Here Roberts did a spot-on impersonation of Rehnquist's deadpan drawl. "That meant that was the end of it, no matter how much you were going to try to persuade him. It wasn't going to happen."

In the end, Roberts suggested, Rehnquist cared somewhat about building consensus, but not all that much. For example, he was willing to join opinions with which he disagreed as the sixth vote, but not as the fifth—in other words, he would compromise for the good of the Court, but only when his vote could not change the outcome. "I don't remember [promoting unanimity] as a feature that Rehnquist stressed much," Roberts recalled.

In deciding to resist the politicization of the judiciary, Roberts acknowledged, he has set himself another daunting task; but he said he views it also as a "special opportunity," especially in our intensely polarized age. "Politics are closely divided," he observed. "The same with the Congress. There ought to be some sense of some stability, if

But even if Roberts's honeymoon lasts a little longer, he will confront a series of challenges that Marshall never faced. In an age when we insist on seeing public officials as personalities and evaluating their actions in personal terms, Roberts faces an uphill battle in persuading his colleagues to resist the spotlight.

The focus on justices as personalities—demanded by the public and cultivated by some justices—directly challenges Roberts's view that justice itself should be impersonal. "What you're trying to establish—wearing black robes and, in earlier times, wigs—[is] that it's not the person; it's the law." To persuade individual justices to resist the pressures to promote themselves rather than the interests of the Court as a whole, he will have to appeal, in different ways, to their respective self-interests, and to a broader understanding of their judicial role. Roberts understandably declined to criticize his colleagues by name. But when he objected to justices who act more like legal academics than members of a collegial Court, it was hard not to think of Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia, who seem more interested in demonstrating their jurisprudential consistency by writing opinions that read like law-review articles than in finding common ground with their colleagues.

Roberts could, in theory, appeal to justices like Scalia and Thomas—and their counterparts on the liberal

wing of the Court—in the following terms: In important cases, on this evenly divided Court, neither the four liberals nor the four conservatives can confidently expect to prevail. Surely it would be in the best interest of each side if it could win half the cases by a unanimous vote, rather than trying to win slightly more often by a 5–4 vote, since a unanimous victory would be harder, in the future, to overturn. Of course, the justice who would be most resistant to this kind of bargain would be the swing justice—at the moment, Anthony Kennedy, who naturally enjoys his unique opportunity to determine the outcome of the most controversial cases on his own. When the swing justice is as self-dramatizing as Kennedy, even the chief's most skillful appeals to the Court's common interests may fall on deaf ears. But Kennedy, like most of the justices, also cares deeply about his own reputation as well as the Court's. So perhaps the best way for Roberts to appeal to Kennedy and his colleagues is by invoking the lessons of history.

I asked Roberts to define the qualities of judicial temperament that he thought successful justices like Marshall embodied. "I think judicial temperament is a willingness to step back from your own committed views of the correct jurisprudential approach and evaluate those views in terms of your role as a judge," he said. "It's the difference between being a judge and being a law professor." In other words, Roberts said, judicial temperament involves a judge's willingness to "factor in the Court's institutional role," to suppress his or her ideological agenda in the interest of achieving consensus and stability.

The history of the Court confirms this insight. On the Court, the brilliant academics are less successful, over time, than the collegial pragmatists. The self-centered loners are less effective than the convivial team players. The resentful braggarts wear less well than the secure justices who know who they are. The narcissists wield judicial power less sure-handedly than the judges who show personal as well as judicial humility. The loose cannons shoot themselves in the foot, while those who know when to hold their tongues appear more judicious. (A justice often achieves more by saying less.) The ideological purists are marginalized on the Court, while those who understand when not to take each principle to its logical extreme are vindicated by history. Justices who view cases in purely philosophical terms are less sure-footed than those who are aware of a case's practical effects. And those with the common touch win broader support than those who live entirely in abstractions.

Two of the most ambitious constitutional philosophers in American history—Thomas Jefferson and Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.—achieved greatness in public life because of, not in spite of, their philosophical inconsistencies. Jefferson was a relatively successful president because he was willing to abandon his strict constructionist

ideals and approve the Louisiana Purchase: he understood that America's future depended on it. And Holmes is a liberal and libertarian hero today largely because toward the end of a career staked on judicial restraint, he belatedly embraced judicial activism in Supreme Court cases involving free speech. The examples of Jefferson and Holmes suggest that a coherent judicial philosophy is important, but so is a degree of flexibility. At the same time, Jefferson and Holmes were repeatedly outfoxed by the less scholarly John Marshall and John Marshall Harlan—judicial thinkers whose conviviality, practicality, and sense of the possible allowed them to transform the law in their own image.

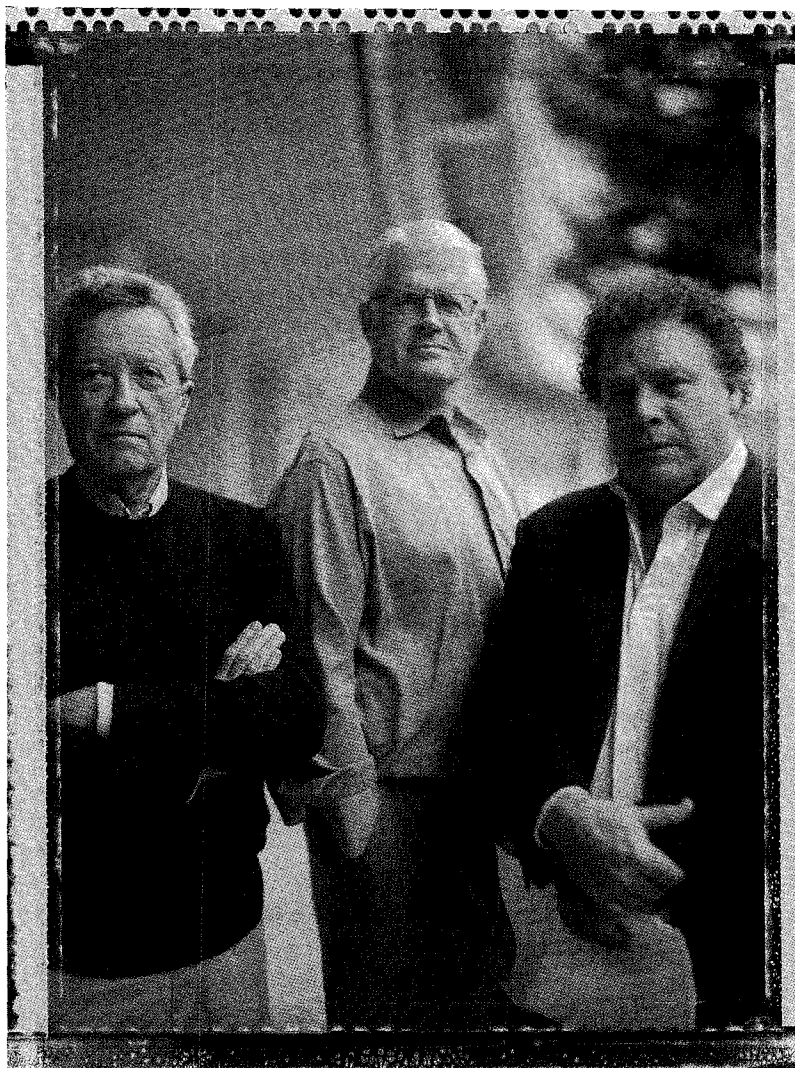
Marshall, after all, had a strong philosophy of his own, rooted in vigorous protections for national power and property rights, but he chose not to press his philosophy in cases he knew he couldn't win. (Remember his axiom: "I am not fond of butting against a wall in sport.") Although conservative Federalists charged that he was too fond of popularity, Marshall was not noted for his willingness to compromise—but he articulated his principles in ways that his opponents were able to accept. Part of what made Marshall trustworthy, Roberts told me, was that "he was not a deal maker, not a broker. That's not how he facilitated consensus. He had strongly felt principles, principles for which he had risked his life ... But he was willing to explain, to talk it out with people, and he had a prodigious intellect but he didn't scare people off with it ... He was friendly, open—people trusted him—and [he] was able to bring people along." As for Marshall's willingness to disappoint his ideological supporters, Roberts says that even if Marshall had the votes to push the Federalist agenda harder than he did, he thought it "better to proceed in a way that ... wasn't going to alienate people on the Court and turn the Court into another battleground."

Throughout its history, Roberts argues convincingly, the Court has best served itself—and the nation—when its individual justices have been willing to subordinate their own agendas in the interest of building judicial consensus and institutional legitimacy. Whether he will be able to resurrect John Marshall's vision in a polarized, unbuttoned, and personality-driven age remains to be seen. But his ultimate success will depend not only on his colleagues but also on his own temperament and character. Roberts approvingly quoted the observation of Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes that "Marshall's preeminence was due to the fact that he was John Marshall." If Roberts succeeds, his success will be due to the fact that he is John Roberts. ▀

Jeffrey Rosen is a professor of law at George Washington University. This article is adapted from his new book, *The Supreme Court: The Personalities and Rivalries That Defined America* (Times Books/Henry Holt). The book is the companion volume to the PBS series *The Supreme Court*, airing January 31 and February 7, a production of Thirteen/WNET New York.

Dismayed by the system
they helped to create,
some veteran political
strategists are out to
subvert it—and create a
better choice for 2008.

BY JOSHUA GREEN



SPACE COWBOYS from left: Jerry Rafshoon, Doug Bailey, and Roger Craver

Surprise Party

The unelected professionals who run campaigns compete in a fiercely Darwinian system. Most can expect a career arc and professional longevity similar to the latest Hollywood starlet's, and even the best are routinely replaced. Ideology and technology change with election cycles, and failure can strike suddenly. It's a cut-throat calling—and when you're finished, and everyone else has moved on, you may well harbor lingering regrets about the tactics you've used to win races. If you've worked in national politics at almost any point in the last forty years, chances are things got worse, not better, on your watch. That can gnaw at you.

It certainly gnawed at three diners gathered in a downtown Washington restaurant on a chilly October

evening just before the 2005 elections, as an unlikely scene unfolded. Over dinner, some of the best political minds of the 1970s, Republican and Democratic, reached bipartisan consensus: none could any longer recognize the political parties in which they had once been major players. The cynical focus on divisive "wedge" issues and the ferocious negativity of recent campaigns, which fed in to an inability to govern once elected, dismayed everyone at the table.

Doug Bailey had pioneered modern political consulting, working with his late partner John Deardourff on behalf of Gerald Ford and other Republicans. Joining him were Jerry Rafshoon and Hamilton Jordan, Jimmy Carter's brain trust in the 1976 election that deposed Ford. Graying now, each successful in a career after politics, the

DAVID DEAL

three had assembled to discuss plans to produce a book and a documentary film about television's impact on the political process—something each had helped bring about, and each had found cause to regret. During the course of a year spent researching their project, even these veterans had been alarmed to discover just how dysfunctional the system had become.

As the evening wore on, a sense of frustration pervaded the gathering, until finally Jordan exclaimed, "Why are you guys just writing a book? Can't we do something about this? The country is in serious trouble here!" And then came the leap. The three decided on the spot that they would create a third party to represent the center in the 2008 presidential election. To guarantee that it would, they decided that the ticket itself would be bipartisan: one Democrat and one Republican. And if independents with bipartisan tendencies were interested, they'd be welcome, too. They called their new party "Unity08" and resolved that it would operate on the Internet. That way everyone could join the party online and participate as a delegate, helping to build the party's platform collectively rather than ceding that task to interest groups, as both major parties tend to do. Ultimately, they hoped, these delegates would select a presidential and vice-presidential candidate in an online convention to be held in 2008, just after the major-party primaries determined the Republican and Democratic nominees. This will be a period of maximal importance to Unity08's founders, who believe that many voters will be dissatisfied with the available choices, and that ambitious candidates—Republicans and Democrats who didn't quite make it, as well as independents—will seriously consider a third-party alternative.

Bailey had been experimenting for years with the Internet applications of politics, in a series of civic-minded youth projects he'd embarked on after retiring from politics. All of the founders recognized that this new technology was poised to transform politics, just as greatly as television had in their own era. They had seen television's effect on the political process grow more and more pernicious as the years went by, poisoning the dialogue while forcing candidates to raise ever-greater sums of money to pay for it. They recognized that the Internet, in its political infancy, was a force that could still be shaped for good.

The three parted ways that evening scarcely believing what they'd decided to do. But in the months ahead, as they studied the feasibility of their plan, they became convinced it could work. Being political consultants, they commissioned a national poll to examine the mood of the electorate and gauge its willingness to accept an independent party. The nation appeared willing indeed: 82 percent of respondents agreed that the country was too polarized to make progress solving problems, and three-quarters wanted more choices than just the Democratic and

Republican candidates. The three persuaded Roger Craver, a pioneer in the field of cause-oriented fund-raising, to join them with the object of financing the effort through online donations, and they recruited an executive committee to raise a \$1 million bridge fund. They also hired the prominent Washington law firm of Steptoe and Johnson to advise them on ballot access in all fifty states. To establish the appearance of sober competence, they enlisted the actor Sam Waterston, a friend of Rafshoon's best known for his role as a principled district attorney on the television show *Law & Order*, to appear in Internet promotions. "I'm one of those people who have been watching politics from the outside with a typical mix of horror and fascination," Waterston told me recently. "The idea is so simple, yet if it works, it's one of those things that will change the direction of the river."

The timing seemed auspicious, less because of the originators' own career stages than because of the current evolutionary stage of the Internet itself. "During the 2004 election," George Vradenburg, a former general counsel for America Online who is advising Unity08, told me, "people's perception of the Internet started shifting dramatically, from the idea that it is an information source to the idea that it is an empowerment tool through which they can impact politics. The Internet has democratized American society in a number of ways. But it has not yet democratized our democracy."

Vradenburg explains that the Internet is a "disruptive technology," meaning one that upsets an existing system in the way that cars replaced horses and digital images are replacing film. Vradenburg and other theorists argue that in the case of the Internet, the disruption occurs in two distinct phases. In the first, the technology mimics a function that already exists, only faster and better (accountants can work from home). In the next, it transforms that function outright (accounting moves to India). He suggested how this might apply to politics: "Howard Dean showed that the Internet can be a great tool for fund-raising and organizing—existing functions performed in a political campaign. The next step is rethinking entirely how you go about the whole functionality you're talking about. That's what's happening here: How do you transform the entire nominating process?"

The creators of Unity08 believe that the answer is to open the process to the Internet masses, causing a tectonic shift powerful enough to disrupt the two-party system. They have not, however, lost faith in that system—merely in its power to correct itself. "The two-party system has worked well for 200 years and can continue to do so," Bailey says, "but only when elections are fought over the middle. Our goal is to jolt the two parties into recognizing this, by drawing them into a fight over the middle rather than allowing them to keep maximizing the appeal to their bases at the extremes."

Bailey and his confederates envision their enterprise not as the establishment of a permanent third party but as a one-shot affair—a dose of medicine strong enough to bring the two parties to their senses. Only then, they believe, can things truly improve. In other words, they are attempting nothing less than to rescue American politics and put the country back on the right track.

Of course, Unity08's formal launch this month also promises its founders the rare shot at a second act on the national political stage and a chance, all these years later, to atone for the past. "They were the first political consultants to grasp the power of the tube to both convince and convert," says Dick Wirthlin, a contemporary who was Ronald Reagan's pollster and chief strategist. "But I would attribute at least part of the tremendous cynicism we're experiencing today to the way politicians and campaigns exploit the dark side of television." The Unity08 principals seem to feel this way, too, which may explain their eagerness to once again harness a powerful new technology to political ends—this time with the wisdom of experience.

"We didn't recognize it at the time," Bailey told me, "but television just ran over us all: it changed our culture, our habits, our mores, our politics—it changed everything. None of us ever asked how we could use this wondrous new technology to improve our democracy. Well, we have another new technology that is going to change everything. If you recognize that right now our politics is as empty as at any point in my adult lifetime, and the issues are as serious as at any point in my adult lifetime, what choice do you have but to try to do something about it?"

One of the many things that differentiate Unity08 from earlier third-party movements is that its founders aren't putting forward their own candidate. What they have in mind might instead best be thought of as the "Field of Dreams" model: build a mechanism whereby qualified individuals of insufficient partisanship to win the Republican or Democratic nomination gain a legitimate shot at the White House, and trust that the best candidates will come. The beauty of the whole thing, Rafshoon explained one day over lunch in a Georgetown restaurant, is that it completely upends the way Americans currently choose their presidential nominees. "The 2004 presidential election cost \$2.2 billion, and the parties left choosing their candidates to a handful of voters in Iowa and New Hampshire!" he exclaimed. "If we do it over the Net and succeed—we think it'll cost less than \$10 million to set up—then we'll have proved that you don't need \$2.2 billion to win the presidency, and we'll have thrown open the process to an online army of millions." As soon as frustrated citizens have that kind of power, the possibilities for electoral upheaval are practically limitless. "It's the perfect vehicle for voters to start a draft movement," Rafshoon said.

During our lunch, Rafshoon spotted Bob Shrum, the manager of John Kerry's failed presidential campaign, peacocking across the room in an expensive suit and a fine silk tie. Shrum has grown rich through politics—his firm is believed to have pocketed \$5 million from the Kerry campaign alone—even though he's lost every presidential race he's been associated with. Rafshoon, by contrast, wore a bright-red sweater and flashed a sly grin as he laid out his plans, resembling nothing so much as a mischievous grandpa about to pull off some bit of deviltry with his cronies at the expense of swells like Shrum (whose job Rafshoon performed for Carter, it bears noting, successfully and for a lot less money). There is something touching about the civic-minded impulse behind Unity08—about its founders' faith, even after a lifetime in politics, that given the means, a kind of ordinary human decency will prevail over the cynical forces that are inflicting such damage on the polity.

There's something touching, as well, about the spectacle of a flock of wise old owls coming out of retirement for one last shot at greatness. It sounds like a Hollywood movie—and was one, if you substitute astronauts for political consultants. Several years ago, Clint Eastwood, Tommy Lee Jones, and Donald Sutherland starred in *Space Cowboys*, whose unlikely plot bears a healthy resemblance to the story of Unity08. The movie concerns a group of hotshot young test pilots in the 1950s—the Air Force's top guns—who are poised to become the first astronauts, until their brash break-all-the-rules attitude gets them replaced (by a monkey). Flash forward forty years, and the buddies are in dissatisfied retirement when fate comes knocking. The monkeys running NASA have bollixed things royally, and a rogue satellite strapped with nukes threatens life on Earth. The astronauts alone possess the wisdom to save it. So, aging and ornery but giddy at having one more chance, they blast off into space.

What has propelled the principals of Unity08 to a launch this month is not fate so much as lifetimes spent innovating for their vision of the greater good. Evident throughout this grand experiment are the career threads of its primary participants and the aspirations that brought them together. After Jimmy Carter lost, Hamilton Jordan returned to his native Georgia, where he became a business consultant (specializing in start-up companies) and a noted author. In his memoir of battling cancer, *No Such Thing as a Bad Day*, he attributes his survival through three bouts with cancer to his own aggressive intervention, undertaken when he lost faith in his doctors' approach. Jordan displayed an early tendency toward the third-party solution when he co-managed Ross Perot's presidential campaign in 1992. Jerry Rafshoon, though he has remained in Washington, left politics with Jimmy Carter to become a Hollywood producer, making documentaries and movies for television; his 1995

film *Joseph*, starring Ben Kingsley, won him the Emmy for best miniseries.

Roger Craver is reputed to have raised more than \$6 billion in small-dollar donations during a career in which he helped start or build many grassroots organizations, including Common Cause, Handgun Control, Inc., the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, and the National Organization for Women. He is famous among his friends for periodically selling his fund-raising firm to his employees and retiring to Martha's Vineyard, only to be lured back into ownership and activism by the latest cause.

Doug Bailey enjoyed an uncommonly long career as a consultant to moderate Republicans, even as the species grew endangered in the 1980s. He quit in 1987 to co-found, with Craver, *The Hotline*, a political tip sheet zapped to subscribers each morning through the then-innovative technology of the fax, and later over the Internet. (It is now owned by Atlantic Media.) A classic early adopter, Bailey was among the first to marry politics and the Web. In 1999, again with Craver, he founded the Freedom Channel, the first attempt to provide online video-on-demand campaigning by offering candidates for the House, Senate, and presidency the opportunity to post clips of themselves speaking directly to the camera about a list of issues the channel provided—an early experiment in dictating the agenda. Through various youth programs, Bailey also experimented with online elections. In 2000, he held a Web-based presidential vote for 1.3 million high-school students, at the time the largest online vote ever taken. He followed that with an effort designed to involve students from 2,500 high schools in the political process by getting them each to obtain voting pledges from ten adults. Several of the students, now in college, have joined one of Unity08's roughly 200 campus affiliates (listed at collegeunity08.com), which are expected to double in number by next year.

If things go according to plan, the next two years will unfold something like this: When Unity08 formally launches its Web site this month, it will begin signing up delegates online. Any registered voter can be a delegate, and can join without having to give up a prior political affiliation. At the same time, the new party's leaders will begin the process of qualifying Unity08 on all fifty ballots for the 2008 presidential election. The requirements for ballot access vary dramatically from state to state, so delegates and other volunteers will perform the work of gathering the necessary signatures. The party hopes to qualify for twenty-five ballots by June.

Intermediate goals like this one are crucial to the movement, because its success will depend on building and sustaining momentum—much as Howard Dean's momentum in the last presidential primary carried him from dark horse to Democratic front-runner in a matter

STATE OF POLITICS

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Historically, twenty-seven states and the District of Columbia have had party registration for voters. The ranks of voters who are neither Republicans nor Democrats have grown dramatically over the years.

Percentage of voters registering as unaffiliated or with a third party, election years 1986–2006

1986	→	2006		CHANGE (pct. points)
11		27	Arizona	+16
4		20	North Carolina	+16
7		22	Florida	+15
12		25	Oregon	+13
8		21	Louisiana	+13
45		58	New Jersey	+13
11		23	California	+12
6		18	New Mexico	+12
7		19	Nevada	+12
33		44	Connecticut	+11
33		43	New Hampshire	+10
40		50	Massachusetts	+10
7		17	Nebraska	+10
2		12	West Virginia	+10
8		16	Maryland	+8
3		10	Oklahoma	+7
12		19	District Of Columbia	+7
20		26	New York	+6
6		12	Pennsylvania	+6
8		14	South Dakota	+6
36		41*	Maine	+5
57		61	Alaska	+4
34		38	Iowa	+4
3		6	Kentucky	+3
21		24	Delaware	+3
10		13	Wyoming	+3
36		34	Colorado	-2
30		27	Kansas	-3

* As of November 2004 (latest data available).

of months. The hope is that the online participatory element will turn Unity08 into a cultural phenomenon. "Younger people, especially, gravitate toward technology, and if it's married to political reform, so much the better," Craver says. "At the risk of drawing too close a comparison to *American Idol*, it's a voting process that will take place technologically, rather than in some smoke-filled back room."

Bailey is drawing on his experience teaching young activists to organize online, and he hopes to set off a viral effect through a "One-a-Week Club," whose members will commit to signing up one new member a week for six months. (Nobody expects this to happen, but if every pledge were to be fulfilled, one delegate would become 34 million delegates in those six months.)

By the time of their convention, a year and a half from now, the founders hope, the party will have signed up as many as 10 million delegates and will be well on its way to qualifying for all fifty ballots, making Unity08 a formally viable path to the presidency. Candidates could gauge their support, and lobby for more, by making traditional appeals and by participating online. As was the case with the Freedom Channel, an important intention of the new party will be to wrest control of the agenda from the candidates and turn it over to the delegates, who will collectively hash out an "American Agenda"—a party platform that Bailey says will be a list not of answers but of questions. This agenda-building process, like all of the party's activities, will be refereed by an internal rules committee. "If we do it right," he says, "these questions will get addressed to candidates on the Unity08 Web site, and the candidates will post a video answer." Bailey is betting that the media will seize on these same questions and put them to all candidates—thereby injecting the American Agenda into the national debate.

Unity08's online convention will be the first party convention since 1952 to feature runoff balloting for a presidential candidate. The rules committee is still nailing down specifics, but the working plan calls for interested candidates—including those who have been the subject of a draft—to declare themselves at the outset of the convention. Once the balloting has winnowed the field to four, each of the remaining candidates will have to choose a running mate from the opposite party: Democrats must choose Republicans they can work with, and vice versa. Independents can choose someone from either party, but in the spirit of unity, they must also name a senior Cabinet officer from the remaining major party—for instance, a Democratic running mate and a Republican secretary of state. Whoever is slated on the official Unity ticket will take on the Democratic and Republican tickets in November. "We're not in this to play around," Bailey vows. "We intend to elect the first truly bipartisan presidential ticket in American history."

For plenty of reasons, this idea might not work. It's never been tried before, for one thing, and the history of third-party candidates is not encouraging. The whole thing may fail to gather speed, and its founders acknowledge that without momentum it won't work. "Third parties are like organ transplants—they're not tolerated well and are often rejected," says Lance Tarrance, a veteran Republican consultant working for John McCain. "These are good people, but they have been relegated to the sidelines by the new American politics, which is more ideological, more partisan, and certainly has created a new generation of operatives. I can only assume that they're trying to influence the system rather than take it over."

Even if the Unity ticket doesn't win, its creators insist, the mere fact of its presence could force the other parties to return to the vast, forgotten middle or risk losing the next election. The Rovian strategy of division might disappear. Or it might not: partisan strategists might instead decide simply to cede the middle and ratchet up partisanship to excite their bases, on the assumption that with Unity08 on the ballot, they'll need only a little more than one-third of the vote. "Once you put the tool out there, it's going to take twists and turns that nobody can predict," Vradenburg admits. "That's some of what the excitement is about."

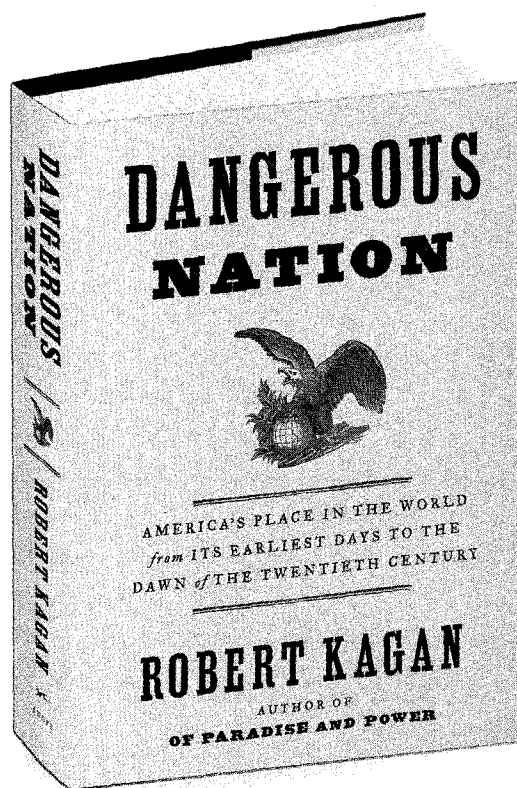
But it's also possible to envision scenarios—quite a few, in fact—in which the Unity ticket might work, or might at least become a significant force in the 2008 campaign. If the parties can't work together on Iraq by then, despite the new Democratic Congress, voters might see Unity's fusion ticket as a way to make them. Centrists in both parties, from Joe Lieberman to Chuck Hagel, are known to harbor presidential ambitions that have little chance of being fulfilled along current paths. If Michael Bloomberg really is considering a self-financed run as an independent, he couldn't possibly prevail in a four-way race against the Democratic, Republican, and Unity contenders—and he's already been a Democrat and a Republican, so why not pursue the Unity nomination? If John McCain loses the Republican nomination, he'll be too old to try again in four or eight years and would loathe waiting around—why not take a final shot at the White House? If Barack Obama concludes that his time is now and yet can't stop the Hillary juggernaut, might he cash in his chips before his popularity wanes? And isn't Jack Welch looking for something to do? Or—heaven forbid—Donald Trump?

It will be a while longer before anyone knows whether Unity08 can live up to its founders' ambitious hopes. But here's how the Hollywood version ends: the aging astronauts become overnight media sensations, and on their final mission, against very long odds, they save the world from certain doom. ■

Joshua Green is an Atlantic senior editor.

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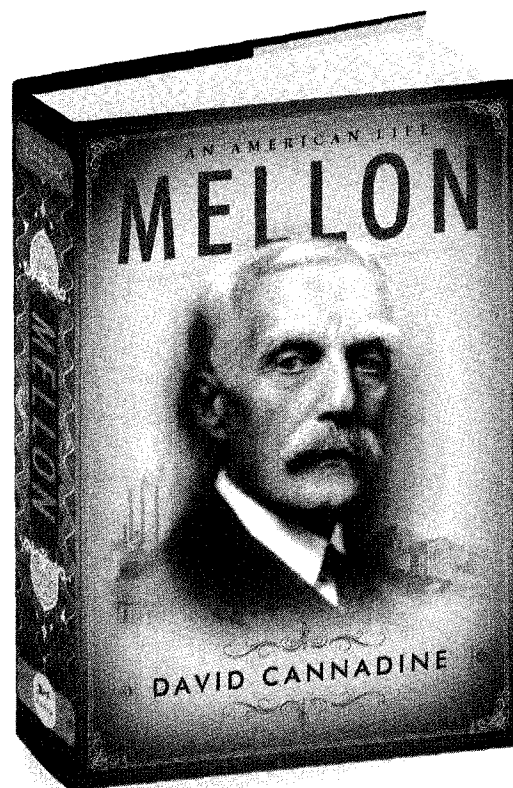
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—Russell Baker, *New York Review of Books*

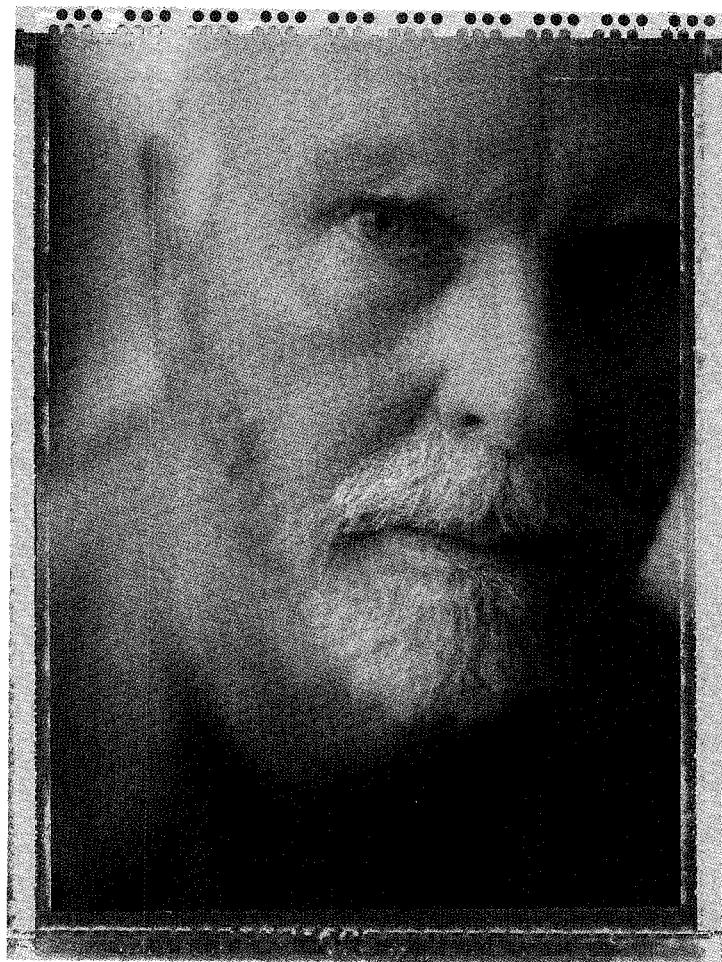
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Mapping the human
genome wasn't enough.
Now Craig Venter is
trying to create
a microbe that will
free us from our
addiction to oil.

BY ROSS DOUTHAT



CRAIG VENTER at his office
in Rockville, Maryland

The god of small things

Back when Craig Venter was the bad boy of science, racing the U.S. government to sequence the human genome—and using some of his own DNA to do it—he kept his face clean-shaven, and often posed for photographs in suits or medical coats. With his high forehead, bald scalp, and laboratory pallor, he looked more like central casting's idea of a respectable scientist than the self-promoting egomaniac that his enemies labeled him, or the surf bum and Vietnam medic that, as journalists never failed to point out, he had been as a younger man.

These days Venter has the air of a richer, less-rumpled Steve Zissou, the Jacques Cousteau-like oceanographer played by Bill Murray in *The Life Aquatic*. He sports a wraparound white beard and has the persistent tan of someone who's spent much of the past few years at sea,

having circumnavigated the globe on a yacht called the *Sorcerer II*. His office, tucked away amid the sprawl northwest of Washington, D.C., seems to boast a model ship for every distinguished-scientist citation, and screens on the walls display a rotating series of photos from his voyage—deep-sea creatures alternating with shots of a wind-blown Venter at the helm. When a writer for *Wired* caught up with him somewhere in the South Pacific, Venter was wandering a beach naked, fishing items of interest out of the water. (“You’re glad I was clothed today,” he joked when I arrived for an interview last fall.)

Not that Venter has settled into retirement. The voyage may have helped him relax and blow off steam after several years in the eye of a scientific, political, and media hurricane. But it was primarily a Magellan-meets-Darwin

DAVID DEAL

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expedition in which Venter and his crew sifted the sea for enough biological material to map the genome of, well, the entire planet Earth, collecting millions of microbes on filter paper and shipping them back to Rockville, Maryland, for analysis. Venter's labs once broke apart human DNA and put it back together again; now they're attempting the same thing with microbial genes.

But this time, Venter is out to build new genomes, not just to analyze existing ones. He's not just trying to understand how life works; he's trying to make it work for him, and us. The race to map the human genome, in its headier moments, promised cures for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, cancer. Venter's current undertaking shows promise for something no less ambitious: a cure for our dependence on oil.

This is how you know that the quest for alternative energy is enjoying a moment in the sun: A Republican president with an oil-company background is talking up alternative fuels and has announced, in his State of the Union address, that America is "addicted to oil." The energy companies themselves—BP and Chevron, for instance—are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in renewable-energy research. And a host of high-profile investors, from Richard Branson to Bill Gates, are jumping into the alternative-energy market as well.

We've been here before, of course. Since the 1970s, researchers have experimented with hybrid electric cars, cold fusion, wind power, solar power, geothermal energy, and hydrogen, all to little avail. Blame insufficient government investment, blame low gas prices, blame our obsession with SUVs, blame the not-in-my-backyard backlash against wind farms and nuclear-power plants—whatever you blame, all our turbines and Toyota Priuses haven't kept America's consumption of oil from skyrocketing.

But maybe this time is different. The scientific consensus on global warming and the role of carbon-dioxide emissions in heating up the Earth is stronger than it's ever been. Concern is growing that the world might be nearing "peak oil"—the moment at which supply starts to decline (leading, some say, to the collapse of industrial civilization). And after 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, just about everyone, from the most left-leaning environmentalist to the most hawkish neoconservative, thinks that for national-security reasons alone, the United States should be importing less crude from the Middle East.

Ironically, though, the most-talked-up oil alternative in this alternative-energy moment is a fuel that's long been called a boondoggle: ethanol, a form of alcohol produced through the fermentation of sugar derived from plant matter, usually corn kernels. The federal government has been boosting ethanol since the 1970s: refiners who add ethanol to their gasoline get a tax break of 51 cents a gallon, and high tariffs help keep out competition from abroad. But

thirty years and billions of dollars later, we have little to show for it beyond a raft of prosperous agribusinesses and a small network of gas stations, mostly scattered around the Midwest, that offer ethanol-compounded gasoline.

Like most alternative fuels, ethanol has problems on both the demand and supply sides of the equation. Fuels that consist primarily of ethanol—like E85, which contains only 15 percent gasoline—cost about as much as regular gas, and deliver fewer miles per gallon. If demand were high for such a fuel, there wouldn't be enough to go around. The industry is currently capable of producing about 4.8 billion gallons of ethanol a year; the United States consumes roughly 140 billion gallons of gasoline annually.

So why the excitement over ethanol? The answer isn't in corn kernels, but in the stalks, roots, and leaves of corn and other plants—"cellulosic" material that's historically been difficult to break down into sugars efficiently, but that now might be only a few breakthroughs away from becoming the source that makes ethanol available on the cheap. Cellulosic ethanol could be made from agricultural waste, so that we need not rob our food supply for our energy supply. Better still, it could be derived from non-food-producing plants grown on land otherwise unsuitable for cultivation. Cellulosic ethanol wouldn't provide a complete solution to our energy problem, but even many skeptics acknowledge its promise, and the Department of Energy is excited enough to have made the pursuit of cellulosic ethanol a key component of its plan to replace a third of annual U.S. oil consumption with biofuels by 2030.

All that's needed is the right science.

This is where Craig Venter comes in—though arguably, he's been there all along. Genomic research, after all, doesn't just offer scientists an opportunity to take apart the genome of a human being, a mouse, or a bacterium to see how it works and what it does. It offers them a chance—if they're sufficiently ambitious, or hubristic—to *change* what a genome does, and to make the organism do what we want it to do. And one of the obvious things we might want organisms to do for us—they already do it for their own purposes—is produce energy.

Venter took a roundabout route to scientific prominence. After growing up in a working-class neighborhood in the San Francisco area, he drifted through junior college, spending most of his time on boats and surfboards, and then enlisted in the Navy to avoid being drafted. It was the mid-1960s, and after training as a medic in San Diego—and being court-martialed for refusing a direct order from a superior officer, a woman he happened to be dating at the time—he was sent to Vietnam, where he spent a year in a field hospital in Da Nang at the time of the Tet offensive.

For the first six months, he worked in the emergency room. A thousand soldiers died around him; a rocket tore through his sleeping quarters. He contemplated suicide,

and one day, as he later told the journalist James Shreeve, he started swimming out to sea, planning to paddle until exhaustion carried him under. Partway out he thought, "What the fuck am I doing?" and decided to swim back and live instead.

After surviving Vietnam—after choosing to survive it—Venter never drifted again. The brashness remained, and the surfer's disrespect for authority, but they were channeled into a fierce ambition and a desire to make a difference in the world. He got married, went back to community college, and then enrolled in the University of California, San Diego, where he earned a joint doctorate in physiology and pharmacology, choosing research over medicine. ("A doctor can save maybe a few hundred lives in a lifetime," he told his brother at the time, with a characteristic mix of ego and idealism; "a researcher can save the whole world.") All this took six years. It was followed by a junior faculty position at the State University of New York, Buffalo, where he drove a baby-blue Mercedes, favored garish shirts and bell-bottoms, split up with his wife, and married one of his students, Claire Fraser. In 1984 he took a position at the National Institutes of Health. There he would first impress and then clash with James Watson, the famous (and famously contentious) co-discoverer of the molecular structure of DNA, who took over the leadership of NIH's branch of the nascent Human Genome Project in 1990. After Venter developed a quick-and-dirty method of identifying genes, Watson, with Venter present, told a 1991 Senate meeting that the technique "isn't science," because the machines "could be run by monkeys."

By the following summer, Venter had quit NIH and raised enough venture capital to found the Institute for Genomic Research, or TIGR, where he would have complete control of all research, although any marketable discoveries would belong to the commercial wing of the enterprise, a company called Human Genome Sciences; this was his initial step onto the nonprofit/for-profit tightrope he has walked ever since. In 1995, his team published the decoded genetic script for the bacterium *Haemophilus influenzae*; it was the first time the complete genome of a living organism had been mapped. Later that year, a team led by Fraser published the genome for the parasite *Mycoplasma genitalium*, a far simpler organism, with only about 500 genes to *H. influenzae*'s 1,800. "We immediately began to ask obvious questions," Venter says. "Is there a minimal operating system for a cell? ... Was [*M. genitalium*] the minimum, or could we eliminate genes from that species and get smaller?"

So began the quest for the "minimal genome," the bare-bones genetic material necessary for life to sustain itself and reproduce. This required dismantling *M. genitalium*, which suggested another possibility: If you could take a genome apart bit by bit, why not put one together in the same way, creating "life from scratch," as Venter puts it, with

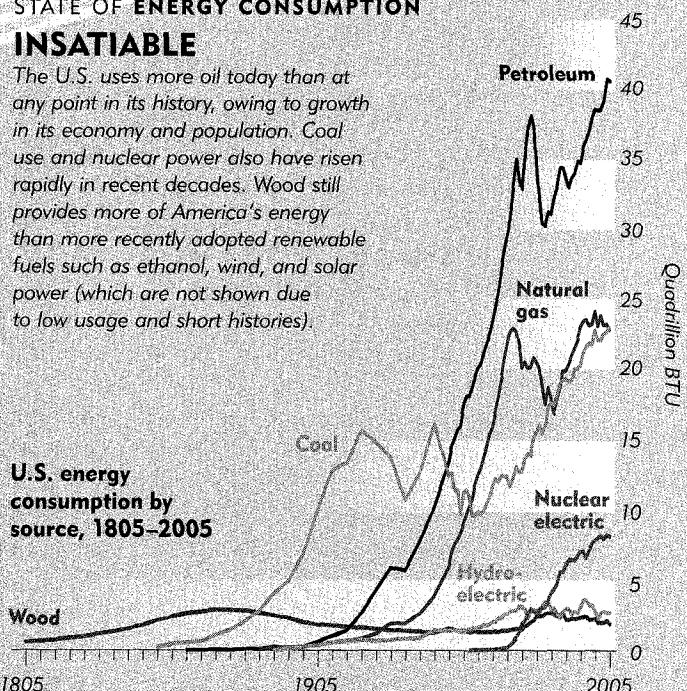
a genome of your choice? Meanwhile, Venter sequenced a third microbe, *Methanococcus jannaschii*, an organism found deep in the Pacific Ocean. *M. jannaschii* is an autotroph, meaning that it generates all its energy from inorganic substances. It survives by converting carbon dioxide and hydrogen to methane, and fixes the carbon from the carbon dioxide into its cellular protein structures—a process of obvious interest in a world with an excess of carbon dioxide. "That organism," Venter says, was responsible for "stimulating our thinking, or my thinking, on the energy front."

But then the human genome beckoned. In 1998, the biotech firm Perkin-Elmer persuaded Venter to head a new company that would use a technique called "whole-genome shotgunning" to try to speed up the genome-mapping process. At that point the government's Human Genome Project, using a slower, more painstaking method, was seven years away from its projected date of completion. The new company, eventually called Celera, vowed to finish the work in three years. The pledge, and the race that followed, made Venter world-famous. It also cemented the reputation for egomania that he had developed at SUNY Buffalo, at NIH, and among his partners at Human Genome Sciences (with whom he feuded and eventually parted ways), and it added a multitude of government scientists and officials to an already-substantial list of enemies.

The Human Genome Project's custodians would probably have resented any private-sector rival, but Venter

STATE OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION INSATIABLE

The U.S. uses more oil today than at any point in its history, owing to growth in its economy and population. Coal use and nuclear power also have risen rapidly in recent decades. Wood still provides more of America's energy than more recently adopted renewable fuels such as ethanol, wind, and solar power (which are not shown due to low usage and short histories).



made himself easy to loathe. In May of 1998, when he met with HGP scientists to outline his company's plans, he suggested that while his team polished off the human genome, *they* might consider turning their attention to another creature. Specifically, the mouse. (After that meeting, Watson, who had left the project in 1992, gave the HGP scientists his view of Venter. "He's Hitler," Watson said. "This should not be Munich.")

Venter's rivals in the government predicted that his method would deliver a patchy, error-ridden product, and warned that if he succeeded in sequencing the genome first, Celera could enjoy a dangerous monopoly over information that rightly belonged in the public domain. They were wrong on both counts, in part because the Human Genome Project, spurred on by the competition, finished at about the same time as Celera. A tie was announced in June of 2000; shortly thereafter Celera's stock collapsed, and Venter was forced to resign as president.

He had money, though, from stock in various companies, and he had freedom: "Having sequenced the human genome," he says with a laugh, "gives you a few options." Using \$100 million of his own funds, he started three not-for-profit research centers, which are now consolidated under the J. Craig Venter Institute. The institute is based in the same Rockville headquarters as TIGR—a miniature campus, with three low buildings roofed in Spanish tile, interspersed with ponds and greenery, and a taller building whose exterior panels are colored red and green, blue and yellow, to represent the four nucleotides (adenine, cytosine, guanine, and thymine) that bind together the DNA double helix and make up the code of life. One of the new centers, the Institute for Biological Energy Alternatives, took up the challenge of creating the minimal genome. Because a minimal genome has no nonessential pathways, it is the ideal template for the creation of designer organisms. By inserting "cassettes" of carefully engineered genes into a stripped-down genome, Venter hoped to construct organisms that would do exactly what he wanted, and nothing else—organisms, for instance, that could serve as "biofactories," carrying out energy-generating functions that had been written into their genetic code.

In 2003 the IBEA team, led by Hamilton "Ham" Smith, Venter's longtime research colleague and the winner of a 1978 Nobel Prize in Medicine, took just fourteen days to reconstruct the 5,386 nucleotide base pairs of a virus called phi-X174, which attacks certain bacteria. A virus is far short of a bacterium, the real goal, which would have hundreds of thousands of base pairs. (Viruses have no metabolic processes of their own, and scientists debate whether they even count as living organisms.) But this achievement prompted Venter to step back into the for-profit world, and in the summer of 2005 he founded Synthetic Genomics, a company that would build on the minimal-genome research. Meanwhile, he was making his ocean-sifting trip on the

Sorcerer II. The first third of the material from the voyage (the rest is still being sequenced) has yielded 6 million genes. Somewhere in this wealth of material, perhaps, are the keys to better living through ethanol—the genes that, inserted into a minimal genome, could produce an organism able to break down cellulose quickly and cheaply.

Or at least that's one possibility. Aristides Patrinos, Synthetic Genomics' president (Venter is the CEO), calls the cheap, efficient creation of cellulosic ethanol "the holy grail," and he should know, having been in the alternative-energy field since the 1970s. Hiring Patrinos was a coup for Venter and a sign that Synthetic Genomics intended to be a major player. Patrinos had been one of the government's point men for alternative energy, while serving as the associate director for biological and environmental research at the Department of Energy from 1995 until last year; he was responsible for getting references to alternative energy into the 2006 State of the Union address, and he succeeded in boosting federal funding for biofuel even as belts were tightening elsewhere in Washington. A wiry, mustachioed man who seems in danger of being swallowed by his clothes, Patrinos has been friends with Venter since the early 1990s, and he supplied the IBEA with government funding in the early '00s, before Venter lured him into the private sector.

Synthetic Genomics is still getting off the ground: when I visited Patrinos, in October, the movers were bringing furniture to its Rockville offices, two parking lots over from Venter's main campus, and half the space was empty, awaiting new hires. The company has quietly approached a number of energy companies for funding. It is using the capital raised so far to support minimal-genome research at the Venter Institute, and it has laboratories in La Jolla, California, where most of its scientists will be based.

Meanwhile, through the institute, Venter has teamed up with the University of California, San Diego, and Iowa State University to compete for \$500 million in funding from BP, which has pledged to establish a biofuel research laboratory at an American or British university. Venter and the two universities have also joined forces to compete for one of the \$125 million grants that the U.S. Department of Energy will award to each of two winning proposals for bioenergy research centers.

Such labs are the places where the rubber will meet the road—or, to quote Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, where "the right microbe" will meet "the right biomass source." Bodman is an enthusiast: he envisions making cellulosic ethanol cost-competitive with gasoline by 2012, and he said in a recent speech that the research centers have "the potential to be the best thing we do during my tenure as energy secretary."

The word *potential* is, of course, key. You can turn cellulosic biomass into ethanol in the lab, but nobody's done it on an industrial scale, and with today's technology,

cellulosic ethanol can cost twice as much to make as its corn-based cousin. So everyone is looking for greater efficiency. Iogen, a Canadian corporation that's currently building one of the first "biorefineries" for cellulosic ethanol, is working on using genetically modified yeast to make fermentation more efficient. Dyadic, a Florida-based biotech company, has been modifying fungi found in the Russian Far East and hopes to produce commercial quantities of an enzyme that breaks down cellulose. Ceres, a California plant-genetics company, is trying to create ideal "energy crops," plants that are hardier and more drought-resistant than your average weed and can be broken down quickly.

All of these avenues, though, are fairly complex. Synthetic Genomics' vision, Patrinos has said, is of the simplest process imaginable: engineered microbes that could transform the crops-to-biofuel process into a one-step stew.

When I spoke with Venter, as an early-autumn rain churned up the ponds on his campus, he was already looking beyond ethanol. It may well be that a gene from the ocean, or elsewhere, will enable a synthetic organism to break down cellulose quickly and cheaply—but that's only the first step to real independence from oil.

"Ethanol's not an ideal fuel," Venter pointed out. In the long run, you want fuels that burn hotter and that don't require long-distance transportation, vast tracts of land, and huge biorefineries. Fuels, perhaps, that you could make at home. ("Everybody would have their own little bath in their backyard and fuel their car from it.") Natural gas from sewage sludge. ("Pretty bad-smelling stuff coming out of septic tanks. If you could convert it into something useful and burn it ... methane is natural gas, you know?") And hydrogen, the cleanest fuel of all, from sunlight. ("We're working on modifying photosynthesis to go directly from sunlight into hydrogen production.")

All of this is speculative, of course. "Sometime in the future," Venter says, "I am a hundred percent certain scientists will sit down at a computer terminal, design what they want the organism to do, and build it." When is "sometime in the future"? He doesn't say, but he is willing to venture that we should expect biological research to spark large-scale changes in the energy scene within the next ten years. The prediction comes with a touch of disarmingly frank self-centeredness: "Ham is in his mid-seventies. I'm turning sixty. We don't want something with a fifty-year timeline. We're egocentric, we want to see it take place, so we're determined to have it take place in the next decade."

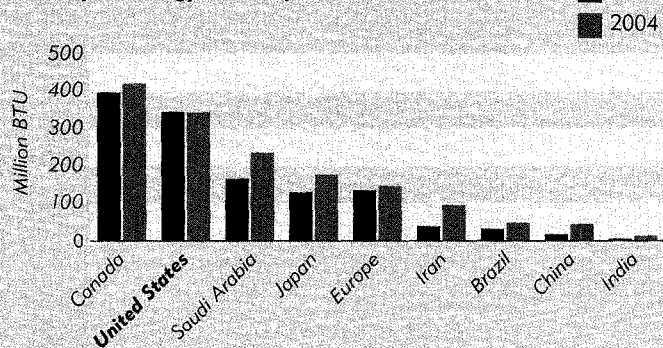
And maybe it will. But research needs steady support, and investors tend to move in cycles. The 1970s saw great enthusiasm for "synfuels," or synthetic substitutes for oil and natural gas; however, the enthusiasm and the funding dried up in the '80s, once gas prices plunged back to earth from their oil-crisis high. Similarly, this past fall, as the cost of

gasoline dropped, the stock market's excitement about ethanol firms diminished as well. Consequently, Venter believes, the government needs to make a steady commitment to alternative energy. But not with props like the 51-cents-a-gallon ethanol subsidy. The government should be funding research rather than actual products, he argues, so as not to create "a false industry that collapses once the subsidies collapse." And not with the sort of large-scale, Manhattan Project-style effort that many pundits have called for. If you put everyone into a laboratory in New Mexico or Nevada and tell them to come up with a solution, Venter says, it will just be the Human Genome Project all over again: a slow-motion process waiting for the kind of private-sector kick in the pants that he provided. Instead, Venter wants to see

STATE OF ENERGY CONSUMPTION LEADERS OF THE PACK

Americans remain extravagant consumers of energy compared with most other people, even those in other rich nations. Total energy use in the U.S. continues to rise, as the nation's population grows. But per capita consumption has stayed flat in the U.S. since 1980; it is still rising in many other countries.

Per capita energy consumption, 1980–2004



the government fund a variety of competing companies and research projects. "I'd rather see a thousand points of light than one dull bureaucracy," he says. "We don't have to have a single industrial-complex solution to this problem."

A thousand points of light. A thousand Craig Venters. It's a very American image, and for a man with a reputation for an outsized ego, it has a surprising humility about it—the Venter idealism breaking through the Venter arrogance. "I'm hoping our research teams come up with the breakthroughs," he says, "but I think as a society, we need those breakthroughs, and there's no guarantee we'll make them. So ... I'd be almost as happy if somebody else makes those breakthroughs."

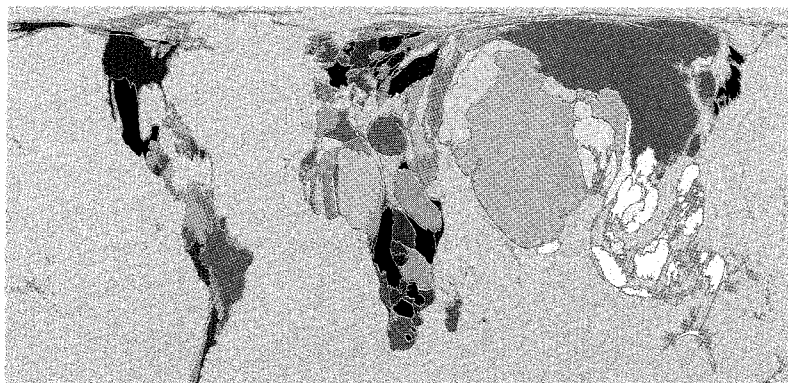
Almost. ■

Ross Douthett is an Atlantic associate editor and the author of *Privilege: Harvard and the Education of the Ruling Class* (2005).

To find the next great ideas, follow
the tractors, tourists, and drinkers.

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

Mapping Innovation

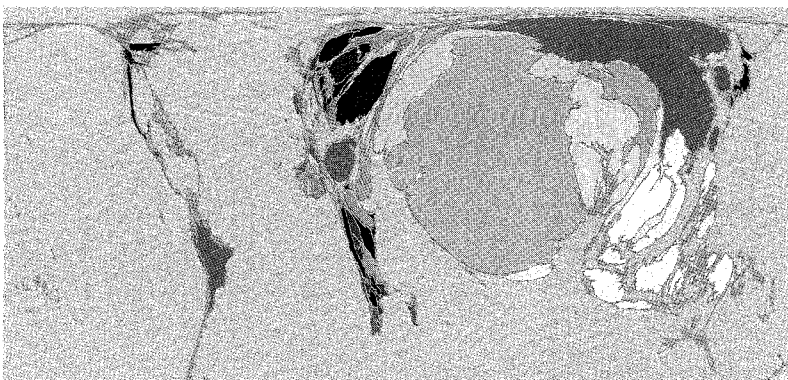


TOTAL CHILDREN

Predicting innovation is something of a self-canceling exercise: the most probable innovations are probably the least innovative. The history of humankind's development can be summed up as the story of surprise. Adam Smith failed to forecast the Industrial Revolution despite his friendship with James Watt, inventor of the steam engine that powered it. And who would have prophesied MySpace, Oprah, or a TSA bar on hair-styling gel in quantities greater than three ounces?

But even if we can't see what innovations are around the corner, maybe we can at least predict what places are likely to be the most innovative in the future. And an innovative tool called Worldmapper might help.

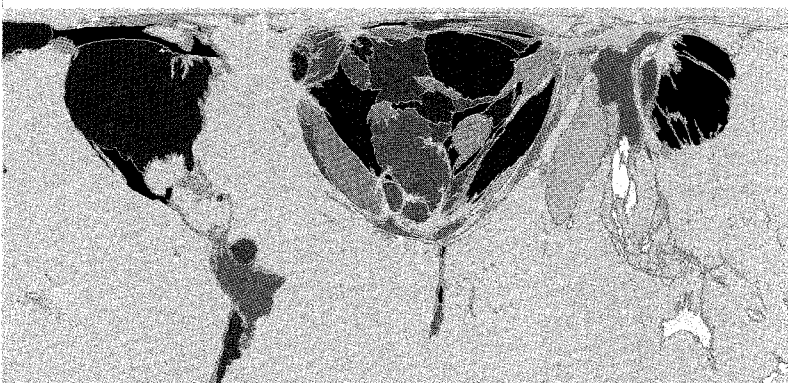
Worldmapper was created by geographers from the University of Sheffield's Social and Spatial Inequalities Research Group (*There's an innovative college major!*) and by Mark Newman, a physicist at the University of Michigan. It allows them to turn all sorts of obscure statistical information into vivid pictures. Countries look skinny or fat according to their share of wealth or trade or population, but retain their familiar national boundary shapes. The results are often cartoonish, but nonetheless scientifically precise. Perhaps a decidedly unscientific tour through a few of Worldmapper's more than 200 maps will help us see which countries are best endowed with the stuff of future innovation—and whether the United States has a fat or a skinny future.



WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

MOTHER IS THE NECESSITY OF INVENTION

No place can be innovative without children. This is not because of the platitudinous link between youth and creativity; the children's art on my refrigerator suggests there isn't any. Ben Franklin was no kid when he invented bifocals. Henry Ford, by all accounts, seems never to have been youthful. But countries with children, demographers predict, will have adults. India, China, and the nations of Africa and South Asia are in the lead, as the **Total Children** map shows. Note, however, that there are adequate numbers of children elsewhere, even in supposedly child-proof Europe and Japan, and



TRACTORS WORKING

plenty in the United States. And not every child will grow up to be an innovative adult.

Each child is biologically required to have a mother. Fatherhood is a well-regarded theory, but motherhood is a fact. What kind of woman is best at lovingly fostering the potential in children? Let us sidestep sociological, economic, and feminist arguments and posit simply a woman who is herself beloved. Quantification of that is difficult, and Worldmapper hasn't tried. But two of its maps, one almost the exact inverse of the other, are nonetheless telling: **Women in Agriculture** (the number of female farm laborers) and **Tractors Working**. It's good when a society values women, not so good when it values women because they are cheaper than a John Deere.

The United States and Western Europe excel in the ratio of farm machinery to women farmworkers. They also excel—as do Japan, South Korea, and South Africa—in another statistic: **Female Managers**. A country is more likely to be innovative when 100 percent of its population, instead of 50 percent, has an opportunity to innovate. Whether the girls and boys of that country are better off with executive moms is sometimes debated. But whether women should have an influence on children is not debatable, and a country with influential women is, perforce, a country with women who influence.

OBVIOUSLY INNOVATIVE

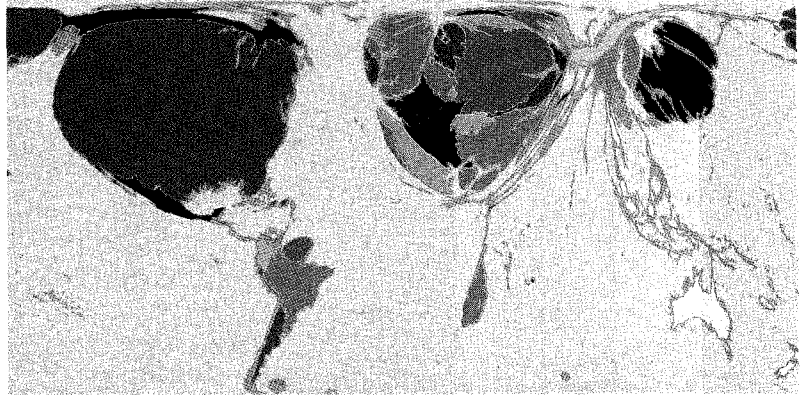
There is a kind of thinker known as a MOTO, a “Master of the Obvious.” MOTOs are hired by the hundreds as editorial writers and news commentators. Though always boring, they aren't always wrong. And it would be a violation of MOTO principles to ignore research and development as a predictor of innovation.

In per capita R&D spending, the United States, the wealthier Western European nations, Israel, Japan, and South Korea are giants. In gross spending (see **Total R&D Expenditures**), China is Brobdingnagian enough, and Brazil and South Africa are midsized titans on otherwise rather un-innovative continents.

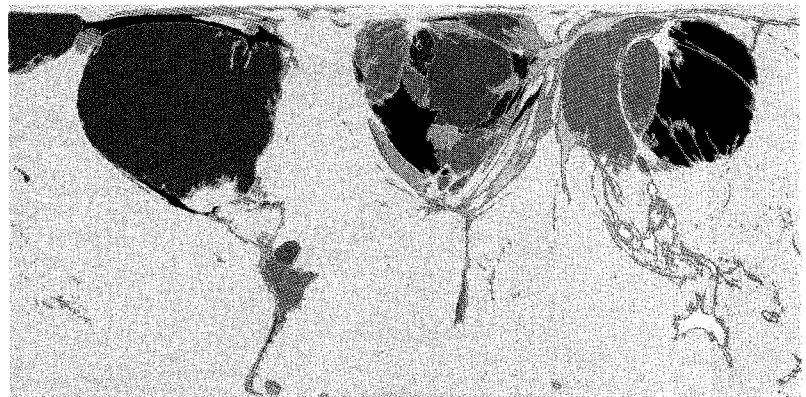
But what are the researchers researching and the developers developing? Cold fusion or YouTube? A cure for malaria or for flatulence? We can't know the future worth of a country's R&D. We can, however, inspect that country's track record. The map of **Royalties and License Fee Exports** gives a picture of where past R&D has been valuable enough that other countries buy it. Gangway for the United States of America! Sorry about that, Japan. Way to go, feisty runners-up Great Britain, Sweden, and France.

A LITTLE EDUCATION ...

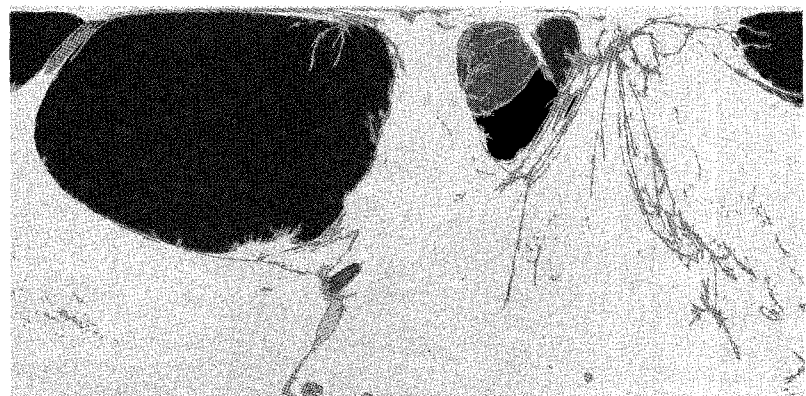
Education is another MOTO indicator, albeit an occasionally dubious one. More years of education do not always yield more innovative thinking, as anyone who has suffered through a Harvard cocktail party can



FEMALE MANAGERS



TOTAL R&D EXPENDITURES

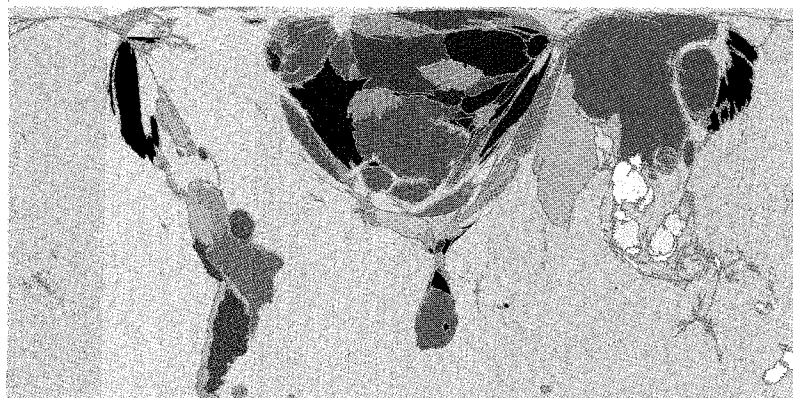


ROYALTIES AND LICENSE FEE EXPORTS

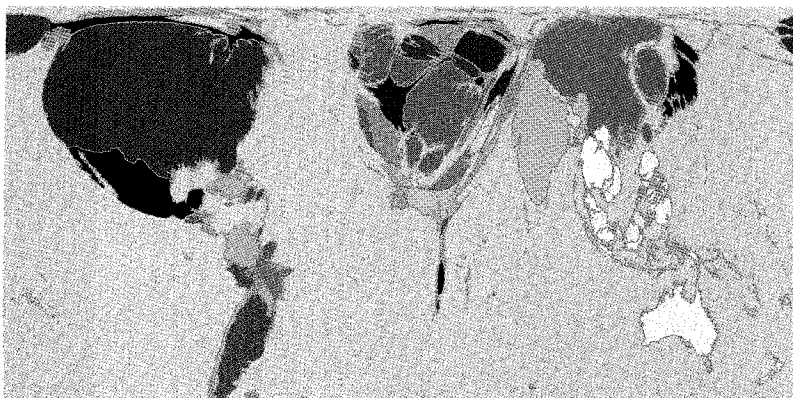
attest. Thomas Edison dropped out of school at age seven. Whoever invented the wheel had no school out of which to drop. Socrates didn't go to a university; he was one.

Education, however, does change minds. And a new mentality is a more significant invention than the moldboard plow or the semiconductor. Not much was really invented during the Renaissance, if you don't count modern civilization.

Currently, spending on education lines up about as you'd expect: rich countries spend more than poor ones. But for purposes of futurism, *growth* in educational spending may be more to the point. The **Secondary Education**



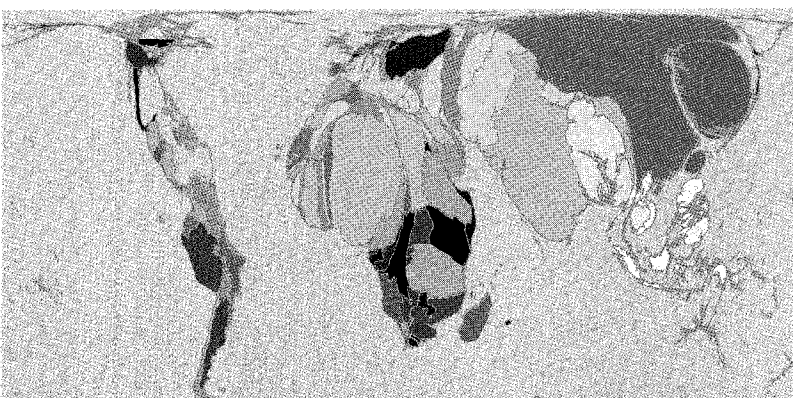
SECONDARY EDUCATION SPENDING GROWTH



PRIMARY EDUCATION SPENDING GROWTH



LIVING ON US\$20 TO \$50 A DAY



SLUM GROWTH

Spending Growth map shows total increases for children aged eleven to seventeen—the time when kids start getting a mind of their own (necessary to innovation, however annoying it is to parents). Here the future seems to belong to Western Europe, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Latin America, the northern and southern (but not the central) parts of Africa, and New Zealand. By comparison, America and Australia are idling or stalled.

But another map, **Primary Education Spending Growth**, gives Yanks and Aussies some hope. Expenditures shown here include preschool programs. Some educators claim that that's when the mind is truly formed. But do you want to hear the engineers building your high-speed particle accelerator say, "Everything I need to know I learned in kindergarten"?

BLESSED ARE THE INNOVATIVE IN SPIRIT

Innovation is necessary to progress, and progress is, we tend to think, necessarily linked to prosperity. But if we look at the most innovative nation in history to date—our own—we see that the most distinctive American innovations were the products of poverty. Bluegrass, gospel, jazz, rhythm and blues, country and western, rock and roll, and hip-hop are the music of poor people. American slang, American style, American fashions and fads have their sources among the least affluent. America's car culture, teen culture, sports culture (and drug culture and gun culture) were shaped by what, in other countries, would be called the lower classes.

One secret to this sort of innovation is rich poor people. To be on the poverty threshold in the United States (\$9,973 per year for a single adult) is to be richer than most people in the rest of the world (per capita global average GDP is \$8,229). A nation's poor can't be innovative if they're famished. Famine takes too much time and energy.

The other secret is what sociologists would call agglomeration and what we'd call a ghetto, inner city, or slum. Poor people are creative by themselves, but put a lot of them together and the result is brilliant—African American artistic genius in the Harlem Renaissance, Jewish intellectual genius on New York's Lower East Side, Irish political genius among the ward heelers and block captains of Boston's South End.

The **Living on US\$20 to \$50 a Day** map shows where people are poor but not so miserably poor that they're sunk in inertia and despair. The world is well supplied with folks of modest means even in Russia, which has previously been inconspicuous on our innovation maps. Such places as central Africa, Madagascar, Haiti, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma seem too poor to harbor innovative forces. And only Scandinavia seems too rich.

But the "Living on US\$20 to \$50 a Day" map needs to be correlated with the **Slum Growth** map. It then becomes clear that the greatest potential for innovation

from below is in Central America, Peru, Turkey, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, China, South Korea, and the Philippines. Be on the lookout for an Incan/Mayan/Muslim/Confucian Manila dance craze.

INNOVATING WITH THEIR FEET

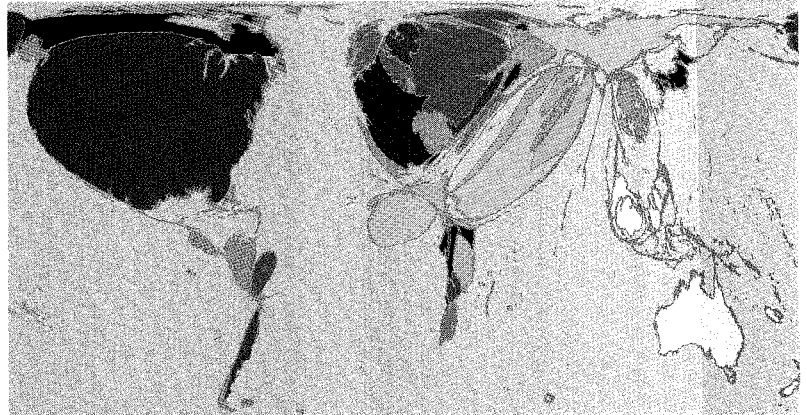
The poor are an especially important resource for innovation when they have the bravery and pluck to get out of the poor places in which they're living. Moving around may be the single most innovative thing that humans do—for good or ill. Our species spread from Africa into the cradle of civilization (a very messy crib at the moment). The scruffy hill tribes of the Tiber conquered the world. The scruffier barbarians conquered them. Mongols with nothing but a few horses to their name swept across Asia. Hungry mammoth-hunters migrated to America from one end of the earth, and their gold-hungry cousins "discovered" it from the other. The results have been innovative in the extreme.

The **Net Immigration** map gives a fairly predictable prediction of future innovation. People are moving to places that have the good life from places where life is not so good. The United States, Canada, Western Europe, Israel, and the posher and more peaceful areas of the Arabian Peninsula account for almost 80 percent of the world's net immigration. Hong Kong, Singapore, and Australia are also gainers. And certain unprepossessing countries in even less prepossessing regions—Venezuela, Costa Rica, Russia, South Africa, and Tanzania—are acquiring brave, plucky innovators.

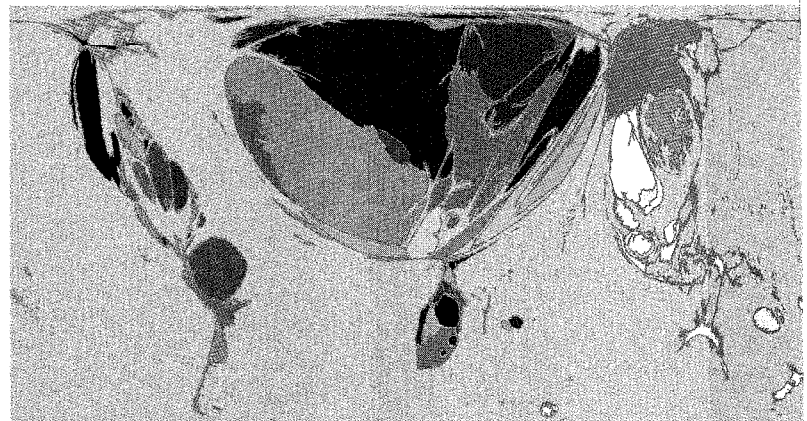
But other movements in human populations are far less innovative. These are the waves of tourists. To be a tourist is to express rank conservatism. Tourists seek the "unspoiled." No one is as offended as a tourist when a warren of crumbling adobe is leveled to make way for a KFC or when a colorful peasant woman is replaced by a working tractor. The **Net In-Tourism** map shows places where visits from tourists exceed the tourist travel of the residents. Thus is sapped the innovative potential of France, Spain, Austria, Italy, Mexico, the Caribbean, southern Africa, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and China.

ATTITUDE-ADJUSTMENT HOUR

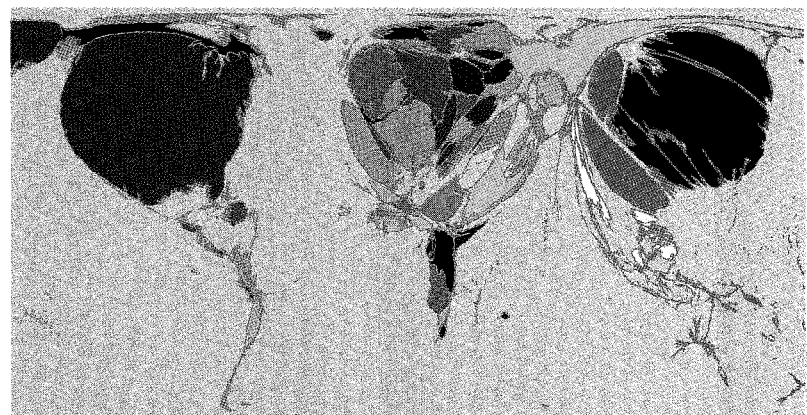
Given all the very rigorous research compiled by Worldmapper, what totally un-rigorous conclusions can we draw? A rough tally of quick impressions of arbitrarily chosen criteria indicates that only about a dozen countries or regions are likely to be innovative in the near future. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the United States and Europe loom largest. But South Korea and South Africa keep popping up strongly as well, and so do Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and a few other places.



NET IMMIGRATION



NET IN-TOURISM



ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTE IMPORTS

All of which is mirrored, at least tolerably closely, by the **Alcohol and Cigarette Imports** map. That's one more thing about innovation: it's very stressful. And who, among the world's innovators, are so stressed that they have to bring in stress relief from overseas? That would be the Americans, the Japanese, the Taiwanese, the South Koreans, and the Continentals in Western Europe. You folks look like you need a drink. Innovation is a damn big job. Congratulations. Have a cigar. ■

P.J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for *The Atlantic*. His most recent book, *On the Wealth of Nations*, has just been published.

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ON THE VINE

A winery in Riquewihr, France.
Toby Lester explores Alsace-
Lorraine in "Map Quest."

PHOTO BY HUBERT STADLER/CORBIS

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Becoming Cary Grant

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

"I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be and I finally became that person. Or he became me. Or we met at some point." That meeting—when Archie Leach, the Bristol-born son of a part-Jewish suit presser, came to be fully assimilated by his creation, Cary Grant—amounts to one of the great events in the annals of twentieth-century culture. It created what the critic David Thomson (in *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*, the finest reference book on the movies) flatly declares to be "the best and most important actor in the history of the cinema." And it's a joy to watch: although the meeting was years in the making, you can actually see it come to fruition in a single movie, Leo McCarey's *The Awful Truth* (1937). Grant's performance in that film was, in every sense, transformative.

In 1931, Archie Leach—onetime latch-key kid (when he was nine he came home from school one day to find his mother missing; his two-timing, alcoholic father had secretly committed her, despite her apparent sanity, to the Country Home for Mental Defectives; she would be lost to Grant until he was thirty-one) and erstwhile vaudevillian (from fourteen to twenty-three he'd performed as an acrobat, juggler, stilt walker, and mime; his experience in acrobatic troupes honed his phenomenal physical grace and exquisite comic timing, and inculcated in him his universally praised generosity and team-spiritedness as a performer)—interrupted his well-paying if unremarkable Broadway career to try Hollywood. The execs at Paramount put him under contract and told him to come up with a screen name; he chose one that conjured the image of the man he wished to become.

An insipid, undefined pretty boy on screen, he appeared in twenty pictures



CARY GRANT with Irene Dunne in *The Awful Truth*

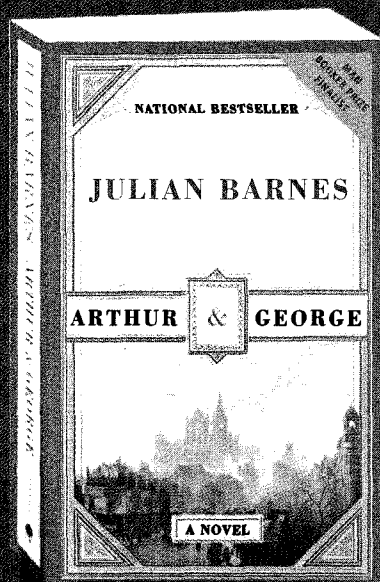
in four years, nearly a quarter of the films he'd ever make, and failed to distinguish himself—though he woodenly received Mae West's most famous, and most misquoted, line: "Why don't you come up some time and see me?" Indeed, his pervasive, obvious discomfort in these creaky movies is the only evidence of his innate intelligence and taste as an actor. But in 1936, something clicked when he played a supporting role in *Sylvia Scarlett*. Though it was a mess of a picture, he shone as a Cockney swindler, a character

close to his roots, rather than the stilted Valentino he usually played. The film's director, George Cukor, recalled that the nearly thirty-two-year-old Grant "flowered; he felt the ground under his feet."

In middle age, Grant would write that in his youth he had lacked "daring and abandon," as well as "confidence and the courage to enjoy life." But now he abruptly came into his own. With his contract soon to expire at Paramount, he resolved to choose his own roles and shape his own career. In one of the gutsiest gambits in

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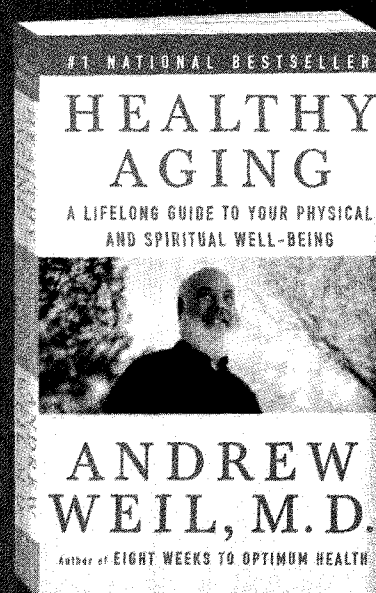
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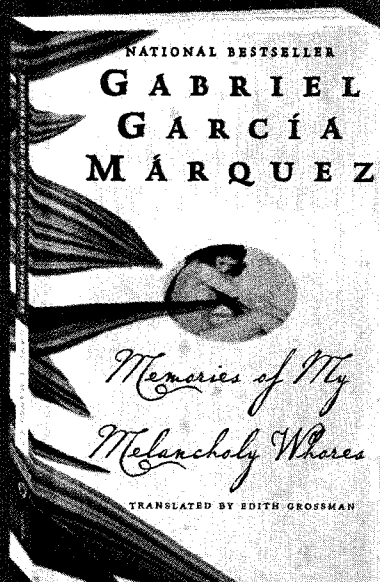
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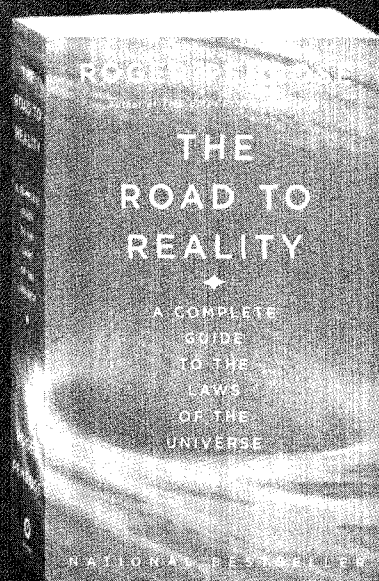
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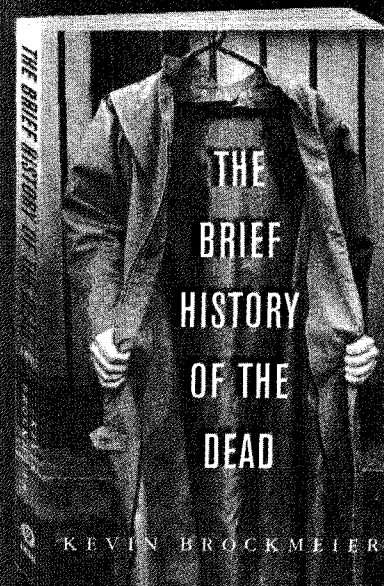
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Hollywood history, he broke from the studio system, becoming the first free-lance star in the modern era. He soon made *Topper*, a flat, "sophisticated" trifle, but one that made oodles of money and displayed Grant's heretofore unrevealed feel for light comedy. That same year, though, he also made *The Awful Truth*—and seemingly from nowhere the Cary Grant persona gloriously appeared, fully formed. All at once there

before mixed in the movies. He was oddly unplaceable: C. L. R. James, the brainy Trinidadian Marxist theorist and cricket writer, noticed at the time that Grant appeared both American and quintessentially English; at once subtle and rollicking, he seemed to James to anticipate nothing less than "a new social type." Moreover, Grant had lost his jejune, matinee-idol look; he now married an extraordinary, intelligent handsome-

ness with an attractiveness beyond the sexual—one equally appealing to men and women—that's best defined by Pauline Kael's memorable description of its effect: "We smile when we see him, we laugh before he does anything; it makes us happy just to look at him." Only the year before, in *Suzy*, he'd performed his pomaded-playboy act opposite Jean Harlow. Indeed, before his performance in *The Awful Truth*, the romantic types available for leading women to play against had been pretty limited. There was that slightly smarmy "Continental"

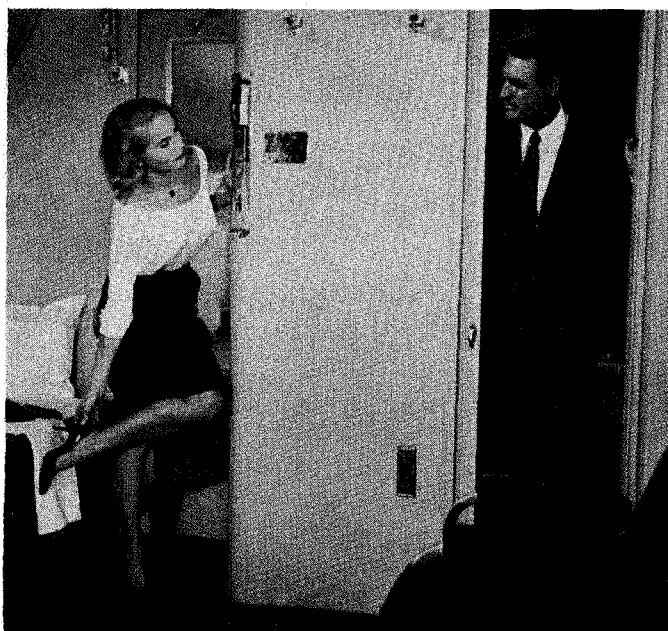
sort; the sophisticate who seemed a bit neutered (think William Powell), or more than a bit (Leslie Howard, Ronald Colman); the aw-shucks, vaguely smug rube (Jimmy Stewart, Gary Cooper); and the smoldering hunk (Clark Gable).

Now, though, Grant found a novel way to treat women in film: he clearly related to his heroine as a sexually attractive woman—and also as a witty, intelligent, and idiosyncratic one. Often he conveyed this by adopting the seemingly obvious but previously overlooked strategy of simply listening to her. (With both his male and female costars, Grant would emerge as probably the best—that is, the most unobtrusively generous—listener in Hollywood; watch his affectless performance while he takes in Stewart's three-plus-minute drunken harangue in *The Philadelphia Story*.) The result was that Grant allowed the actress's

performance to emerge and flourish. He thus transformed his leading ladies "into comic goddesses," as Kael nicely put it—a feat that was something of a miracle in the case of the cute-'n'-toothy Irene Dunne, or the self-important, inherently humorless Katharine Hepburn.

Moreover, with his sui generis accent (an amalgamation of low-born and refined, of West Country lilt and hard Cockney, overlaid with the clipped patter of baseball talk), his subtle phrasing, and the clean bite of his diction, he delivered lines with a precise sparkle never equaled (see in *The Awful Truth* how with cheery malice he turns the throwaway offer to sprinkle "a little nutmeg" on his rival's eggnog into a threat). But he also joined a gift for quick, clever, complex dialogue with a brilliant comedic physicality. That physicality itself was at once delicate (watch him punctuate a joke by simply bending a knee or arching an eyebrow) and broad (James Agee wrote that the silent comedians "combined several of the more difficult accomplishments of the acrobat, the dancer, the clown, and the mime," a skill set that was lost with the advent of the talkies; Grant more or less single-handedly recovered it, and could execute clumsy pratfalls without forfeiting his uncanny grace).

In his blending of the urbane and the rambunctious, he found a way to be true to his own background, which he plainly adored, while reconciling that background to the vision of a suave man-about-town that he had aspired to as a working-class young man. Although Grant's early Hollywood image seemed a denial of his former self, he kept Leach very much with him after he came into his own: he always spoke matter-of-factly and lovingly of his working-class origins, and he savored playing Cockney characters—see *Sylvia Scarlett*, *Gunga Din*, and the uncharacteristically sober *None But the Lonely Heart*, his most personal film; his references to "Archie Leach," of course, would be an affectionate running gag in his pictures. The key to his appeal was that, as Kael noted decades ago, his "romantic elegance is wrapped around the resilient, tough core of a mutt,



CARY GRANT, with Eva Marie Saint and *The Suit in North by Northwest*

was the detached, distracted wit; the knowing charm; the arch self-mockery; the bemused awareness of his audience, with whom he was sharing a joke (a quality that made him simultaneously cool and warm); the perfectly timed stylized comedic movements—the cocked head, the double takes. And, not least, the good-natured ease combined with a genius for pitiless teasing (see the hilarious, similarly agonizing interrogations, in *The Awful Truth* and three years later in *His Girl Friday*, to which Grant's character subjects his former wife and her suitor—the latter played on both occasions by that brilliant stooge Ralph Bellamy—regarding their anticipated provincial home life).

Moreover, he suddenly created a new hybrid, combining qualities that hadn't

and Americans dream of thoroughbreds while identifying with mutts."

When Cary Grant assimilated Archie Leach, he began what would be the most spectacular run ever for an actor in American pictures: in four years, he made *The Awful Truth*; *Bringing Up Baby* (in which the worldly charmer plays to perfection a character teetering and most unworldly); *Holiday* (he's an exemplar of uncomplicated decency in this, one of his most understated comic performances); *Gunga Din* (Grant plainly having the time of his life, horse-playing in the Raj); *Only Angels Have Wings* (in which he plays a cool, often cruel, romantic lead, prefiguring his 1946 role as the withholding, manipulative, and—to Ingrid Bergman—enthralled Devlin in *Notorious*); *His Girl Friday* (America's *Rules of the Game*—if our civilization vanished tomorrow, nearly all of its best and most distinctive aspects could be reconstructed from the slangy, sassy grace of this film's dialogue); *The Philadelphia Story*; and *Suspicion* (the first of his four movies for Hitchcock, who later called Grant "the only actor I ever loved in my whole life"; Grant risked his entire carefully wrought image and career here, as he established that the line between charmer and sociopath is very fine indeed).

In this period, he won his permanent hold on America's, and the world's, imagination and affections, and he would remain one of the most popular leading men in the movies for nearly the next thirty years, a reign never matched. Though Richard Schickel wrote that Grant sparked "a delight so innocent and perfect that the attempt to analyse its sources seems an act of ingratitude," such efforts to comprehend this ultimately ungraspable self-invention have nonetheless proved irresistible. Grant, in fact, has probably inspired more interesting and intelligent writing than any other star of the sound era.

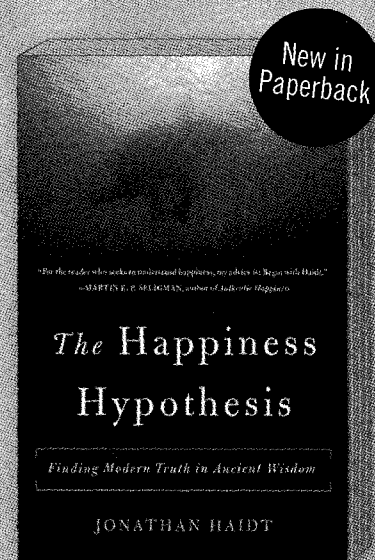
But it took a while. James's speculations, quoted above, were only published posthumously, and the best film writer during that most glorious period of Grant's career, Otis Ferguson, never

wrote an extended or penetrating assessment of him (nor did Agee). Although pretty much universally esteemed by the critics, Grant possessed, as Thomson discerned, a "technical command ... so complete it is barely noticeable." Kael's effort to define Grant's elusive allure in her seminal 1975 essay, "The Man from Dream City" (reprinted in *When the Lights Go Down*), changed all that. And that same year, Thomson's entry on Grant in his masterwork issued a call for the most serious critical consideration of his persona and acting, which Schickel provided in 1983 with **Cary Grant: A Celebration**, an unusually astute and ambitious coffee-table book. That former boy genius Peter Bogdanovich, a close friend of Grant's for twenty-five years, has written sweetly and perceptively, if briefly, on Grant (most memorably in his winning *Who the Hell's in It*, published in 2004), though I long for him to write the kind of graceful monograph on Grant's body of work that he did years ago for Howard Hawks's and John Ford's oeuvres. Most important, Grant is the subject of one of the best full-length biographies of a Hollywood actor, the incisive and considered **Cary Grant: A Class Apart** (1996), by Graham McCann, a Cambridge don. (Probably because an academic house published it, the book was largely and unjustifiably overlooked in this country.) Tom Wolfe was obviously hankering to define Grant's charisma in his delightful and thin 1963 profile "Loverboy of the Bourgeoisie" (reprinted in *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*), but the young dandy was obviously floored by Grant's easy social grace and above all by "the ... clothes, all worsteds, broadcloths and silks, all rich and underplayed, like a viola ensemble." (Wolfe, unlike, say, Gay Talese, writes much better profiles when he's mean.)

But style does betray the man, and looking at Grant's is a clever way to approach him (as Kael observed, his clothes formed "almost an intrinsic part of the Cary Grant persona"). Of course, he is, along with Fred Astaire, the best-dressed actor in American movies. But whereas Astaire favored the small, very

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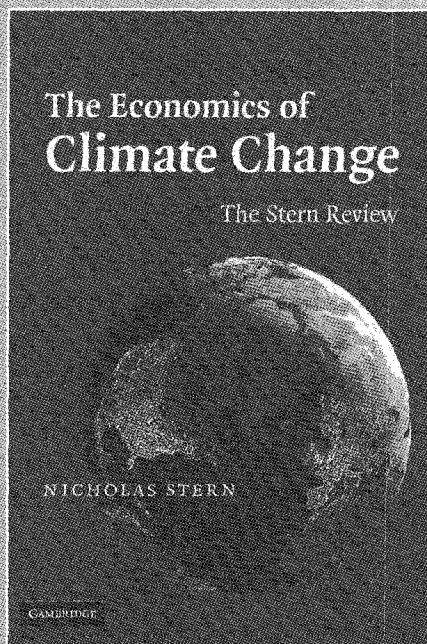
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high armholes of the fitted Savile Row look, Grant's suits, while usually English tailored, had a more relaxed, slightly American cut—a transatlantic fusion that gave him a silhouette both clean and nonchalant. Grant achieved his easy look and manner only through meticulous planning and attention to detail (from his years in vaudeville he learned to choreograph his performances with clockwork precision—he was always known as a *perfectly* prepared actor), and he believed that the right presentation on- and off-screen was the result of 500 details—hence his corrective missives to his shirtmakers when his collar points were an eighth of an inch too short. Gorgeousness requires the soul of an old lady.

I knew all this without referring to Richard Torregrossa's **Cary Grant: A Celebration of Style** (foreword by Armani, afterword by Kors), which I guess means that this book is superfluous. But the author very nicely synthesizes a lot of material on Grant—much not directly related to things sartorial—and has produced a smooth and very well-illustrated primer. He does, though, get some little things wrong: on page 49, that's Dan Tobin with Grant (in *The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer*), not Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and Savile Row suits between the wars were *not* called "sack suits."

And Torregrossa stumbles when it comes to one big thing. He devotes four pages to explicating what's wrong with ventless jackets, how Grant came to eschew them, why double vents look best (they don't), and the ways Grant modified his vents. He then holds up that perfectly tailored slim-line suit Grant wore during his cross-country travails in *North by Northwest* as an example of the star's preference for customized vents. Torregrossa is talking here about the most famous suit in pictures. Todd McEwen wrote a smart and stylish *Granta* essay on it ("*North by Northwest* isn't a film about what happens to Cary Grant, it's about what happens to his suit"). *GQ* has declared it nothing less than the best suit in film history. It's ventless. ■

Benjamin Schwarz is *The Atlantic's* literary editor and national editor.

BOOKS

Down the ladder from *Playboy* to *Maxim*

Are We Not Men?

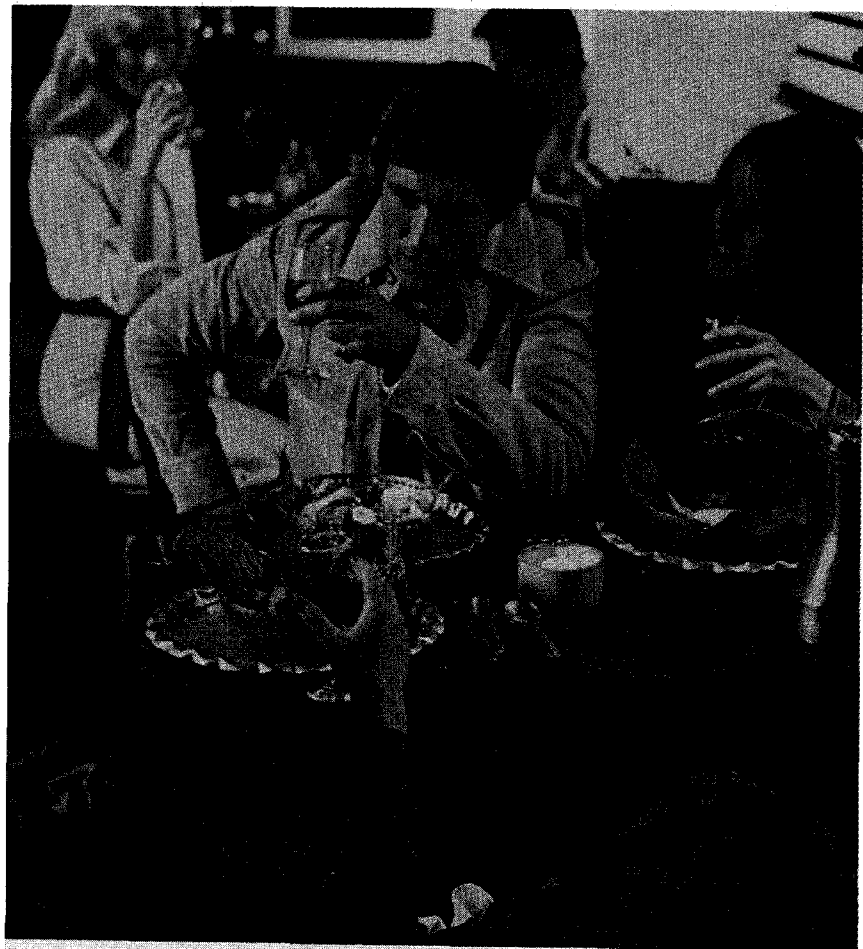
BY JON ZOBNENICA

In a 1963 account of his visit to the Chicago Playboy mansion, Nelson Algren wrote, "However paradoxical it may appear, the young male who assumes early that physical relationships with women are part of life is more likely to develop respect toward women than is the young male who abstains from such relationships." He meant it as no compliment to his host, adding that *Playboy* "does not sell sex. It sells a way out of sex." I take his point now, but I hadn't heard of, much less read, Nelson Algren when I was a young male, and it was precisely my dad's *Playboy* magazines that helped me early on do a lot of assuming about my physical relationships with women.

Algren deserves credit for being perhaps the first person to walk right into the woo grotto and—figuratively, at least—yank down Hef's pajama bottoms. His criticisms were the more damning for coming from just the sort of worldly tomcat *Playboy* sought to publish (and did), and the more bold for coming at a time when Hugh Hefner was a much tougher figure to take lightly than he is now. With the golden anniversary, in 2003, of *Playboy's* founding, and with Hefner having just turned eighty (surrounded by a platoon of bottle-blonde girlfriends whose combined age, depending on troop strength, may or may not exceed his own), a lot of ink has recently been spilled on the man, the magazine, and the myth. Not much of it very flattering. Everyone from *The Washington Post* to *The Weekly Standard* has gotten in punches or, at best, backhanded praise. There's been the predictable fun (*Slate's* David Plotz hilariously referred to Hefner as "the human bellbottom," a walking bit of retro kitsch for the nouveau swinger set), and also the obvious

criticism that the *Playboy* lifestyle was a marketing sham, and the even more obvious observation that the magazine's centerfolds have hardly represented *la femme moyenne*. In a *New Yorker* review of *The Playmate Book: Six Decades of*

Centerfolds, Joan Acocella wrote that "there is one basic model. On top is the face of Shirley Temple; below is the body of Jayne Mansfield." Which is a wonderful line, and also as cute and exaggerated as Acocella claims the women



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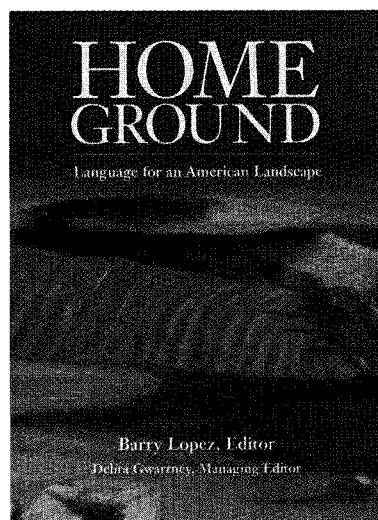
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in question are. It's the sort of remark that's only true enough to satisfy those who need no convincing, proving that *The New Yorker*, too, knows how to meet reader expectation with a shrewd blend of verity and pretense.

But was there ever a time—at least in a long time—when we didn't already know all this about *Playboy*? Even at thirteen I was aware that I was in the presence of the purest fantasy. (Having locked myself in a bathroom, I could hardly pretend otherwise.) Then again, I also fantasized about becoming a wide receiver for the Minnesota Vikings, understanding full well that *that* was never going to happen, but that there would soon enough come a time when I'd have relationships with women, and that until that day, I could do worse than read *Playboy*. And yes, even then I read the magazine—a little. Specifically, the *Playboy* Advisor. I admit I was lured in only by the dirty talk, and skipped all the letters on stereophonics and the proper care and storage of leather loafers. But over time these exchanges left me with the distinct impression that love—or even just good sex—was often quite complicated, requiring of its participants an almost unnerving degree of trust and vulnerability, patience and negotiation, all of which could lead to unimaginable thrills or horrible disappointment. Or anything in between. It was here, in the Advisor, where *Playboy* willfully undercut the silken ease and bachelor suavity it projected elsewhere in the magazine. It was here where bodily matters went unairbrushed, where seduction proved beyond one's skillful way with imported vodka, where men would not infrequently be scolded for treating their girlfriends or wives shabbily. (The cynical reading of this phenomenon has been that *Playboy* very astutely sows the seeds of male anxiety, the better to sell itself and its glossier fare as a necessary diversion—if not the solution. Which is true only to the extent that every magazine, from *Martha Stewart Living* to *The New York Review of Books* to the one you're holding now, survives by suggesting that you need what it offers. Again, it's true enough to convince those who need no convincing.)

In the October 1973 Advisor, a man on the verge of marrying a small-breasted woman wonders if he can honestly go ahead with the nuptials, given his fears of desiring more-ample women. To which he gets, in part, this response:

It's not a question of honesty; it's a matter of maturity—yours, not hers. A marriage is more than the sum of its anatomical parts; success depends on qualities of love, respect and compatibility.

In the February 1976 Advisor, a woman writes in that her boyfriend, who's miffed that he can't bring her to orgasm (though he claims he's successfully done so with every other lover), has tried to pressure her into a threesome with another woman as a remedy. The response reads in total:

Your partner has come up with a rather novel excuse for experimenting with a third party (necessity is the pimp of invention or the mother of deviation), but we doubt that a *ménage à trois* would be the answer to your problem. While a triangle might show him by direct comparison that all women are different, it might also double his failure rather than his fun. Since you are more familiar with your response than he is, do what you can to increase your pleasure. Patience is not something that can be measured or corrected with a stop watch: By making orgasm the goal of your love-making, you may have changed the event into an endurance contest with no winners. Love for the moment, not the finish. Sex is a mystery, but when it works, it reminds us of what Raymond Chandler said: The ideal mystery is one you would read if the end was missing.

Thirty years on, in March 2006, *Playboy* was still at it, offering this response to a writer who defended (on grounds of "intimacy or commitment issues") another man's reluctance to label his partner a *girlfriend*:

You may be correct about his issues, but he should work them out on his own time rather than wasting hers. Labels may be confining, but after three months "girlfriend" threatens no man.

(This last exchange can be found in *Dear Playboy Advisor*, a recent collection of zesty give-and-take from the column's past ten years.)

Yes, however paradoxical it may appear, I developed a respect toward women in part by reading *Playboy* as a young male. What's more, I developed an interest in women that went beyond the sum of their anatomical parts, and did so at first out of sheer boyish faith in that supposedly bogus *Playboy* lifestyle. During my countless sequestrations with the magazine, I took in not only the powdered limbs and bedroom eyes but also the general atmosphere of adult men engaging with adult women. There they'd be, nicely—if, in hindsight, absurdly—dressed men and women, together at a housewarming or a holiday party or a favored night spot. (Picture, on the guys, Dingo boots, LeRoy Neiman-hued vest suits, and a glimpse of woolly chest hair that hinted at unabashed back shrubbery. And on the women, strategic cuts of every unnatural fiber known to man, all of it somehow unnaturally fetching.) Or maybe a lone couple would be smoking Viceroy's and picking out some unfinished furniture, or tickling the ivories during a relaxing evening for two. Or groups of couples would be skiing or having a clambake. (In a scene of homely domesticity, there's even an October 1970 pictorial featuring the hirsute Elliott Gould—wearing nothing but a big black watchband—laughing, nuzzling, and smoking with Paula Prentiss in a dingy bubble bath, while an equally hairy Saint Bernard looks on.) Call me naive, even romantic, but I was quite moved by the notion that someday I would—or should—enjoy trad-

ing tales of whimsy around the fondue pot with female acquaintances as much as I was currently enjoying riding my bike and grab-assing with my buddies.

The typical *Playboy* guy—arm candy, sports car, Canadian Club, pinkie ring—may or may not have been an exponent of marriage (I knew some who were), and certainly his getup wasn't complete without a cool splash of patriarchalism, but it's just as certain that *girlfriend* didn't threaten him. So when, at nineteen, and living in my very first apartment, I cleared out half my medicine cabinet and half my closet, and gave them over to the California blonde who'd just moved in with me, it felt as true to the life I'd seen and imagined as my red Camaro and my Brutini Le Sport shoes. This was no capitulation; this was part and parcel of the dream. She and I would get dressed up (in ensembles no less silly in hindsight) and go to classy restaurants. Or we'd cook in and watch a movie, and drink wine and grown-up cocktails. We went to clubs on Sunset, hit the slopes in northern Arizona, caught a striptease act in the French Quarter with another couple, and spent a night among friends hot-tubbing and sipping daiquiris in the Santa Cruz Mountains after a day of crabbing near Half Moon Bay. This was, it seemed to me, exactly what *Playboy*

years and a long, cold decline, gave it up. At the age of twenty-five, I felt like I'd been divorced but never married.

All in all, not a bad start.

Looking back, I realize it's not only the clothes that make me laugh. The restaurants we went to were "classy" at best. And none of us particularly enjoyed those New Orleans strippers (one looked like a rheumy sharecropper's daughter). But there was, in all of it, a deliberate effort at contemporary maturity, an effort that was encouraged by *Playboy* magazine. Maturity was the key to that great Playboy Club of life—your all-access pass to the jumping realm of adult pleasures and preoccupations. We may have come of age clumsily, but no one doubted that it was the thing to do.

Where did those days go?

Several new men's magazines—led by the laddie triumvirate of *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM*—have been eating into *Playboy*'s readership for a decade now, and what they primarily encourage is a lot of boyish grab-assing. (A recent headline from *FHM*: "Stooge Luge! Now people can ride something dumber than your sis." And one from *Maxim*: "Man Punks Nature: Yes, Mother Earth, we are the boss of you." *Stuff*, for its part, has offered such puntastic fare as the Yo, Bitchuary! and the Bro-file.) Incidentally, all three magazines are also great advocates of the sort of lite lesbianism that the aforementioned Playboy Advisor discouraged. Even still, they do bear a faint resemblance to *Playboy*. There's hardly a trace of the old journalism, and no fiction, but there are the numerous girlie pictorials, in this case teasingly non-nude; the gadgetry and the spiffy autos; the obligatory fashion spreads. However, where the sexes are concerned in lad land, it's almost completely separate but equal, which is to say equally puerile. These mags are full of bravado (not limited to the guys) about hooking up, but otherwise, basically, the twain never meet: you might score with the opposite sex, but you hang out with your own—which perfectly captures a sensibility people my age (fortyish) tended to ditch before they left their

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had espoused: finding a nifty chick and sharing the good life with her. Not that it was all good, of course (the Advisor had prepared me for that, too). We had our fights, fretted about school and work, nursed each other with less and less sympathy through various hangovers, moved into separate places, lived together again, got furious, got bored, and after five-plus

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teens, and which indicates that the average lad finds *girlfriend* scary.

What made *Playboy* novel in the beginning wasn't only the newsstand nudity; it was that a men's magazine would bring the proceedings indoors, in urban (and urbane) settings, and include women in the action as well, as critical players in the social (which is not just to say "sexual") mix. Many have had an easy laugh at Hefner's claim that he and his ilk liked "inviting in a female for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex." One can imagine that after "Nietzsche who?" and "Never mind," a lot of jazzy sex ensued, and that the Continental touches were a mere "Let me show you my etchings" come-on. But Hefner wasn't the only American editor partying hearty to the Euro beat. Read Gay Talese's 1960 essay "Looking for Hemingway," on George Plimpton and the *Paris Review* crowd. This sort of multicultural dilettantism was like catnip in those early days of the UN—and, of course, still is in some circles.

When *Playboy* was establishing itself, most men's magazines, as revealed in *The History of Men's Magazines, Vol. 2*, were still heavy with adventure (war, gunfights, outlawry, cannibalism, man-versus-beast encounters, lots of Nazis). Women, if present, tended to be either damsels in distress (rescue fantasies loom large) or vamps—or else they were mere cheese-cake intermissions, like Helen Petroff in the July 1956 *Man's Life*, situated as she and her bikini and her stuffed tiger are between "Attacked by a Giant Boa" and "25 Best Fishing Spots." This class of magazine advertised everything from rifles, knives, fishing tackle, trusses, accordions, and high-paying jobs in meat cutting to Charles Atlas body-building regimens and careers in accounting and real-estate brokering (the March 1958 *See* even has an article on how to ask for a raise), all of which suggests a readership that ranged from Sam the butcher to Walter Mitty.

Playboy, exhibiting little interest in "Jim Bowie's Big Knife" (*Argosy*, August 1956), instead gathered the ladies and set a tone of cheerfully mixed company and sleek cosmopolitanism. The April 1962 issue, for example, has a classic

photo essay showing handsome couples out and about in Paris, part of which is reproduced in *The Playboy Book: Fifty Years*, a gorgeous sampling of illustrations, covers, candid, travel photos, and concept photography as well as the requisite figure studies. It's an intoxicating collection—provoking no small amount of loopy nostalgia. But that's all part of its charm. There may be poignancy in Hefner's bourgeois midwestern dream of the luxe life; witness the stilted grooviness of the old *Playboy's Penthouse* TV show, now available on DVD under the blanket title *Playboy After Dark*, in which Hef, a polite young man turned psychology major, does his best impression of a tuxedoed

with what Patsy Matthiessen, the ex-wife of one of the *Paris Review* founders, said to Talese about that milieu:

The whole life seemed after a while to be utterly meaningless ... And there was something very *manqué* about them—this going to West Africa, and getting thrown in jail, and getting in the ring with Archie Moore ... And I was a Stepin Fetchit in that crowd, getting them tea at four, and sandwiches at ten.

One might argue that the average *Playboy* belle isn't sophisticated enough to register such pique, but that would seem only to make Matthiessen's treatment the worse.

There may be poignancy in Hefner's bourgeois midwestern dream of the luxe life, but is this any more quaintly touching than Plimpton and company's Ivy-abroad, shabby-chic attempt to relive the Lost Generation?

hipster-host. But is this any more quaintly touching than Plimpton and company's Ivy-abroad, shabby-chic attempt to relive the Lost Generation? At least Hefner, against all odds (many, many odds), seems to be held in high regard by just about every woman who ever knew him, including ex-wives and ex-girlfriends and all manner of coworker. *The Playmate Book* has an air of lighthearted reunion, only so much of which can be manufactured. Many of the former centerfolds have submitted biographical updates and family photos, and over the years have returned to the mansion on occasion to see old acquaintances and even pose for reunion pictorials—sometimes decades after their initial appearance, and looking better than ever. (This bonhomie is borne out in testimonial after testimonial in the documentary *Hugh Hefner: American Playboy*. Yes, it's an obvious brief for the defense. But still, no one's forcing first wife, Mildred, or ex-girlfriend Barbi Benton to recall fondly the man who cheated on them prodigiously.) Compare all that

Who would ever have thought that where rude male self-indulgence is concerned, Hefner could be outdone by a bunch of patricians? Apparently so as not to suffer the same emasculating fate in their day, the laddies at *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM* take every opportunity to nudge readers, with eyebrows dancing, and ask (actually shout), "Aren't we just so naughty?!" Which can only be answered, "Not really." To open these magazines is to walk into a teenage boy's room: the air scented with dirty socks and the contents of wadded-up Kleenex; the walls decorated with pictures of swimsuit models and he-man athletes and sports cars; the desk barely visible under piles of video-game cartridges, action figures, and forgotten junk food; and all of it colored by the boy's glee in knowing it exasperates Mom. In fact, that phantom mom (or equivalent mother figure) is just about the only palpable female presence in these magazines.

Sure, there's the cheesecake, all of it daintily low-cal. And it's intriguing,

NEW FICTION

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

In this very dark comedy, a sort of *Desperate Housewives* for the thinking reader, Rachel Cusk eschews her tendency toward the far-fetched, which keeps readers at arm's length from the emotional life of her previous novels. Instead she bores into the real and all-too-recognizable anxieties of an existence driven by "the getting and having" that constitutes modern life for the professional class.

Point of view shifts among five suburban London women. All are affluent; all are mothers of young children; all feel that their expectations for their lives have in some way been betrayed. But Cusk has a keen eye for subtle yet immensely significant social and circumstantial distinctions. The preoccupations of domestic life threaten to overwhelm these women, and Cusk's vision of their resentment over their husbands' freedom to remove themselves from this all-consuming world—to watch from the shelter of their cars while women, towing small children, struggle "burdened, bedraggled" along the sidewalk—is dead-on. Children here, in fact, are part of the getting and having, at once essential to their mothers' identities and pure "unvarnished, unmitigated work"; at once the mothers' product and consumer.

Relief from this bleak view comes from the very vigor of Cusk's characters. Each has made a home in this homogenous place, but for a markedly different reason; each is plagued by her own distinct worries; each finds consolation in her own way. They are, in other words, strikingly real people. And then there is Cusk's writing—so diamond sharp and so lushly metaphorical that even had this substantial book no substance, one would read it happily.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.



if unconvincing, to learn that many of these lasses are part-time sapphists (which is meant, I suppose, to suggest a sort of compound interest). It's equally intriguing—again—to discover that the theme of juvenile swinishness that pervades these magazines is celebrated without regard to gender. In the September 2006 *FHM*, a toothsome female wrestler informs readers of her signature move: “The Stink Face,” which involves her rubbing her butt in the face of a cornered opponent. In the February 2006 *Maxim*, in the Free Upgrades feature (“Dump Your Girlfriend for Me!”), one of the selling points of said upgrade is that “She’s Raunchy!” “It’s totally cool to burp,” says our next girlfriend.

The girls in lad land are but lads with tits, making the leering that goes on among readers of these mags akin to gazing at your poker buddy, imagining him as a woman, and wanting to get nice.

Assuming this is what fires the loins of today's young men, it's worth mentioning as an aside that whereas *Playboy* suggested affecting Euro-sophistication as a way of landing women, these guys share somewhat the taste of a famous mid-century Euro-sophisticate whose truest sexual fancy was a crass American tween. In the words of Humbert Humbert himself:

On especially tropical afternoons, in the sticky closeness of the siesta, I liked the cool feel of armchair leather against my massive nakedness as I held her in my lap. There she would be, a typical kid picking her nose while engrossed in the lighter sections of a newspaper, as indifferent to my ecstasy as if it were something she had sat upon, a shoe, a doll, the handle of a tennis racket, and was too indolent to remove.

Elsewhere Humbert cursed his powerlessness against Lolita's mixture of “charm and vulgarity” and her “diffused clowning which she thought was tough in a boyish hoodlum way.”

It's just such boyishness in the females of lad land that's most striking (or, rather, it's that the lads seem to desire it so much). Aside from the C-list starlets, who come off like well-bred dames in this context, the majority of laddie girls profess exactly the interests of the lads themselves: roughhousing, football, beer chugging, NASCAR, girl-on-girl, muscle cars and motorcycles, pro wrestling, video games, burping, and being as dumb as humanly possible. In short, these women are but lads with tits, making all the leering that presumably goes on among readers of these mags curiously akin to looking across the table at your poker buddy, imagining him as a woman, and wanting to get nice.

If this represents a barreling return from the fringes of feminization, I think it's safe to say we missed our exit a few miles back. It's one thing not to want to attend coed baby showers (or even penthouse parties in formal wear, with all that snooty conversation); it's another to frolic in a musky frat pad of our own making, where men are men and girls are boys. No wonder feminists haven't bothered much with challenging this new chauvinism. What woman really cares that an awful lot of guys seem to love being segregated yahoos? (Maybe just the one looking for a decent date.)

Take Richard Roeper (the C-list Sis-kel), who urges *FHM* readers to “Stay Single!” His sermonette to the boys' choir, which captures perfectly the laddies' acute fear of *girlfriend*, was about the closest thing to the *Playboy* Advisor I could find in the lad mags—not counting columns in which Ted Lange (Isaac from *The Love Boat*) and Heidi Fleiss (the Hollywood Madam) answer

delicate questions as only they can. And for comparison's sake with the Advisor, here's Roeper's tongue-flaccidly-in-cheek list of the advantages of single life:

- Never having to pay alimony.
- Pizza for breakfast. And nobody to give you a hard time about it.
- You know those baseball hats, video games and autographed sports stuff guys store in the garage when they get married? I have it all on display in my guest bedroom. If I was married, that room would be a nursery.
- You don't have to pretend to be interested in *Desperate Housewives*.
- Vegas. Guilt-free.
- Softball on Mondays, poker on Thursdays, boys' night on Fridays, football all weekend. And never having to check with anyone to see if that's OK.
- Women. Plural.

What sort of man reads *FHM*? Apparently the sort who fetishizes his own headgear and hasn't charm or confidence enough to negotiate the tricky ritual of breakfast for two; the sort who gets a licentious thrill from not having to ask permission to stare at his TV all weekend. In short, a weird little nebbish.

As in so many circumstances, we do right to consult a man who was, by some accounts, himself a weird little nebbish with women: George Orwell. Sixty-five years ago, in “The Art of Donald McGill,” Orwell turned his eye to a genre of postcard that specialized in vulgar humor, from marital to sexual to scatological. “They have an utter lowness of mental atmosphere,” Orwell wrote. “But,” he added, “at the same time the McGill post card ... is not intended as pornography but, a subtler thing, as a skit on pornography.” Which nicely captures laddie fare, and the childlike tone of the mags in general. But rather than see malignancy in McGill's work, Orwell felt that it was nothing but “a harmless rebellion against virtue,” and that such relatively timid rebellion in itself pointed up the sturdiness of the virtues being mocked. The postcards, with their ceaseless portrayals of browbeaten

husbands, clapped-out wives, and despotic mothers-in-law, inadvertently demonstrated, according to Orwell, "a stable society in which marriage is indissoluble and family loyalty taken for granted." In other words (and coming at it from a different direction), since men and women had by and large submitted, and committed, to the hard work of relationships, they'd earned the right to do a little bitching and belittling—and McGill's postcards gave a safe outlet to these collective moods.

Of course, marriage these days is as soluble as cotton candy, and family loyalty has less opportunity to prove itself (or not) when so many people shy from starting families in the first place. But the lads aren't really flouting that old convention. That was more *Playboy's* beat, decades back. The laddie burlesque of male chauvinism is almost purely a reaction to feminism's ascendancy, which people of both sexes have long taken for granted. And feminists are quite right to feel unthreatened by the lads' rebellion. Because in fact, it isn't a rebellion at all but, rather, a capitulation. It's as if American masculinity has finally surrendered to decades of feminist criticism, criticism the lads have assimilated fully, because—unlike the *Playboy* men of yore—they've known no other world. One can wish that the lad shtick were subversive minstrelsy of a sort, an absurdist attack on unflattering male stereotypes, but more likely, and all pretend insensitivity aside, the laddies are sadly sincere in their embrace of buffoonery. They're adopting—before the fact, and with the cold comfort of intent—the very characteristics that would most ensure further criticism, further rejection, which is essentially to take control of defeat by forfeiting the game rather than risk another losing effort. It is, in short, to take control by running away.

In this—paradoxically—the lads' behavior is much more closely connected to that of the sensitive, New Age, pantywaist male than to that of the devil-may-care rogue of old. Along with most of their critics, the lads have preferred

to think that they represent a male backlash, a testosterone-soaked atavism, a rude if somewhat ironic return to the pre-James Taylor days. But their fear of women is nothing but a rueful extension of Mr. New Age's obsequiousness, their pantomime of sexism nothing but utter compliance with the harshest feminist critique—nothing but a dancing-bear routine in the feminist tent show. It's enough to put a real man off his popcorn. The *Playboy* guy of old didn't fear women; he surrounded himself with them. And where the battle of the sexes was concerned, he gave as good as he got, not by running from or validating the criticism directed at him but by refusing to let it define him, one way or the other. To borrow some New Age jargon, he knew who he was—he was comfortable in his skin—and if certain people found him abrasive at times, so be it. He made sure to have other qualities that recommended him, qualities that included a social seriousness that was reflected as well as cultivated in the pages of *Playboy* magazine.

This current state of affairs is a sorry one for all involved. Women understandably wanted to fend off, or reform, that lecherous *Playboy* man. And no matter how pointed their criticism may have been, implied in it all was a belief that men could, well, take it like men. The typical guy might have chosen to see it as a compliment, an endorsement of the competitive spirit, an invitation to some social and intellectual roughhousing, as it were. Yet if the man-children captured in the lad mags are any indication, the typical guy has chosen instead to fly off to a laddie Neverland where he amuses himself with boys (and maybe the occasional Tinkerbell) and refuses to grow up. Wendy Darling, Peter Pan's girlfriend manqué and Neverland's own ultimately exasperated make-believe mother, knew well this boy-on-boy dynamic, more than once exclaiming (albeit with a mother's good humor), "I'm sure I sometimes think that spinsters are to be envied."

You said it, Darling. ▀

Jon Zobenica is an Atlantic senior editor.

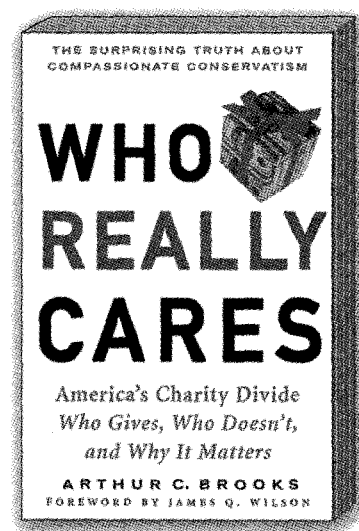
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In 1956, the British stumbled in Suez, and the Soviets crushed the Hungarian uprising—revealing the fatal flaws of modern empire.

Imperial Follies

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Fifty winters ago, Russian tanks were demolishing buildings in Budapest, and British warplanes were bombing Cairo International Airport. The coincidence of these two crimes and disasters made a fool out of the nascent United Nations, gave birth to the New Left, put an end to European colonialism, curtain-raised the fall of Communism in 1989, and confirmed the United States as the postwar superpower. In retrospect, the twin episodes of hubris seem almost irrational. Yet hubris has its reasons, too, and they are worth examining.

"If a particular cause, like the accidental result of a battle, has ruined a

state," wrote Montesquieu in considering the role of chance and contingency in the Roman case, "there was a general cause that made the downfall of this state ensue from a single battle." Though this insight may verge on the tautologous, it is nonetheless superior to the view—pungently expressed by one of the pupils in Alan Bennett's triumphant success *The History Boys*—that history itself is no more than "one fucking thing after another." The powder train had been laid across Europe before the random event at Sarajevo, and might almost as easily have been ignited by the confrontation at Agadir in Morocco a few years earlier. If

the Confederacy had not been so hubristic as to fire on Fort Sumter, it certainly was hubristic enough to be doomed to make a comparably fatal mistake.

Perhaps this view necessarily applies better to endings than to beginnings: one does not have the same sense of certainty concerning, for example, the open question of which European people would or could have been the first to subjugate and settle the Americas. Hegel's famous remark about the owl of Minerva—which takes wing only at dusk, and which thus enables one to mark only the closure of a period—is for this reason much over-employed. But

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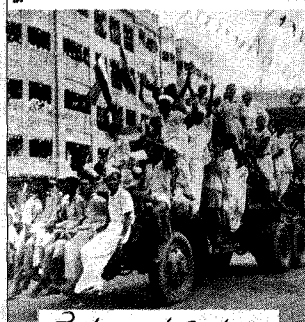
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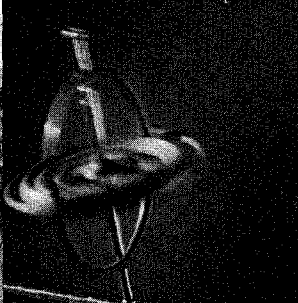
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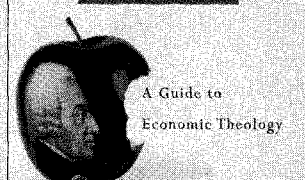
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the crepuscular theory of history is no less serviceable for being something of a cliché. When General de Gaulle was asked why he was so reluctant to recognize Communist rule in Eastern Europe as permanent, he responded, "*Parce-que l'avenir dure longtemps*."

Once it is pitilessly conceded that the future has a big future, certain once-epochal events immediately become more manageable and intelligible. In the fall of 1956, one undoubtedly saw the closing moments of two very imposing systems. One of them, the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, was ironically almost Rasputin-like in surviving the evidently mortal wound and staggering

inclined to reach for repression as the first resort. And so it was in practice. But Victor Sebestyen's illuminating book shows a surprising degree of self-awareness in the Kremlin, which understood—subjectively, so to speak—that its Hungarian puppets were unloved and incompetent, and might draw the Red Army into a moral and political trap:

Under [Mátyás] Rákosi's stewardship Hungary's economy was a disaster, unease was growing, the jails were full to overflowing, the courts were handing out sentences of a severity that could not be justified and Rákosi's personality cult was appearing more and more ridiculous.

If we concede that the future has a big future, once-epochal events become more intelligible—like the closing moments, in 1956, of the Soviet and British empires.

on for several more decades. The other, the British Empire in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East, had already outlived a number of apparently terminal moments but after Suez, expired almost at once. The "verdict" of history was still the same in both cases and was apparent to some clear-sighted people at the time.

It is not often pointed out that in 1956, both the Russian and British empires had recently undergone the psychic experience of another sort of *fin de régime*, with the resignation of Winston Churchill and the death of Joseph Stalin. Their successors, Sir Anthony Eden and Nikita Khrushchev, had more to prove—and more to fear from invidious comparison—than either might have liked to admit. As these books demonstrate, both leaders felt compelled to act in ways, and in circumstances, in which they were as much the prisoners of events as the masters of them. And sometimes they were acutely aware of the fact. Most people tend to think of Soviet actions in Eastern Europe, for example, as the outcome of petrified bureaucratic thinking that was

When the local Stalinists were summoned in 1953 from Budapest to a crisis meeting in Moscow, it was in order to be told that they were a disgrace to Communism. No less an authority than Lavrenti Beria attacked the excesses of the Hungarian secret police (which must have stung a bit), while Georgy Malenkov, according to Soviet archives, announced sternly:

We, all of us here on our side, are deeply appalled at your high-handed and domineering style. It has led to ... countless mistakes and crimes and driven Hungary to the brink of catastrophe.

In May 1955, the Soviet Union agreed to evacuate its troops from neighboring Austria, on the grounds that they were no longer needed nor (to put it mildly) wanted in that country. At almost exactly this time, the British Conservatives, recognizing that the end of dominion in India logically reduced their dependence on Suez, had also made the essential concession by evacuating the Canal Zone

and admitting that their period of direct rule in Egypt was at an end. Yet in October 1956, the Red Army was a hated invader on the streets of Budapest, and not long afterward, British soldiers were wading back ashore at Port Said. How came such cruel follies to be committed?

The short answer is that neither imperium could face the idea of being replaced by an inimical local government. Hungary had "joined" the Warsaw Pact on the day before the Red Army agreed to pull out of Austria, and Britain hoped to retain indirect control of the Suez Canal by means of a system of alliances with local Arab elites. The patriotism of the Budapest reform-Communists, and the nationalism of the Nasserists, threatened to remove both countries completely from the larger orbits that had held them in place. Superpower self-pity also played a role: Russia and Britain had taken large casualties in living memory in order to rescue Hungary and Egypt from Nazism. And at the back of the minds of both Khrushchev and Eden—the hardened inner-party survivor and the suave patrician diplomatist, both of them political veterans of that same war—there palpably lurked the queasy feeling that their mighty predecessors would never have let things get so far out of hand.

Had they been fully rational, both leaders would have felt constrained by the possible reaction of the Eisenhower administration. Wm. Roger Louis, in his incomparable set of essays on Suez, quotes directly from the letters and messages that the president sent to Churchill and then to Eden, making it unmistakably plain that any unilateral British action would immediately forfeit all American support. Meanwhile, CIA-sponsored radio stations were beaming incendiary broadcasts into Hungary, promising aid in the event of an armed resistance to Soviet rule. Yet both the Russian and British governments went ahead as if these and other considerations were irrelevant. In view of the so-called special relationship between the United States and Britain, it is remarkable in retrospect that it was the British who were more severely

punished by Washington: Dwight Eisenhower coldly withdrew American support for the pound, while the American promises to Hungary proved to be chiefly rhetorical. The discrepancy is explained by Eisenhower's strong feeling that Eden had lied to him about his intentions. "Anthony," he demanded in an acrid transatlantic telephone call, "have you gone out of your mind?"

The answer to this, much disputed by modern historians, was probably yes: Eden had undergone a botched operation which had nicked his bile duct and was suffering from what might politely have been called "stress." Such are the truly unpredictable factors for which Montagues was attempting to allow. But the French and Israeli governments, which colluded with Britain in the attack, were not led by men in personal crisis, and they were also told by Washington to get out of Egypt at once or face the consequences. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in particular had made the decision that no matter how much America's junior allies stressed the Russian threat to the Middle East, America was more endangered by the association with "colonialism."

The biggest losers in all this were the people of Hungary. In spite of all the brave talk about the "rollback" of Stalin's gains in Eastern Europe, the Eisenhower administration seems to have quite cynically decided to exploit the Russian intervention for propaganda purposes, while quite consciously doing nothing that could hamper the Soviet design. Victor Sebestyen and Charles Gati both cite Vice President Richard Nixon actually putting the policy into words at a National Security Council meeting: "It wouldn't be an unmixed evil, from the point of view of the US interest, if the Soviet armed fist were to come down hard again on the Soviet bloc." Malign neglect might have been excusable as *realpolitik*—the two

superpowers had only recently entered the H-bomb era—but the parallel CIA program of hypocritically encouraging rebellion via Radio Free Europe was unconscionable and has never been forgiven. One especially deplorable element in CIA propaganda was the repeated lie that Hungarian Prime Minister Imre Nagy had requested the return of the Red Army. That falsification greatly increased the difficulties faced by this courageous if hesitant man, and ultimately made it easier for the hardliners to have him hanged.

The British Cabinet, ostensibly America's chief Cold War ally, never even discussed Hungary. It was this self-centered

indifference, perhaps more than anything else, that animated the great campaign against the Suez adventure launched by Aneurin Bevan, the Labour Party's spokesman on foreign affairs. Not only had Eden acted outside international law, said this most eloquent of the advocates for democratic socialism, and lied about his collusion with France and Israel; he had increased the isolation and misery of the Hungarians at just the time when they most needed their friends. This was in some ways the finest hour of the left in the Cold War, and it meant that the tens of thou-

sands of people who deserted the Communist parties that October felt they had somewhere to go. Meanwhile, the abject failure of the United Nations even to comment on events in Budapest until it was too late cannot be blamed solely on Henry Cabot Lodge's decision, taken in concert with Eisenhower and Dulles, to downplay the issue. "There is only one motto worse than 'my country right or wrong,'" as Bevan once phrased it, "and that is 'the United Nations right or wrong.'" This is not the only lesson that the intervening half century has taught us. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is an *Atlantic* contributing editor and a *Vanity Fair* columnist.

ENDS OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM:
The Scramble for Empire, Suez, and Decolonization

by Wm. Roger Louis
I. B. Tauris

TWELVE DAYS:
The Story of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution

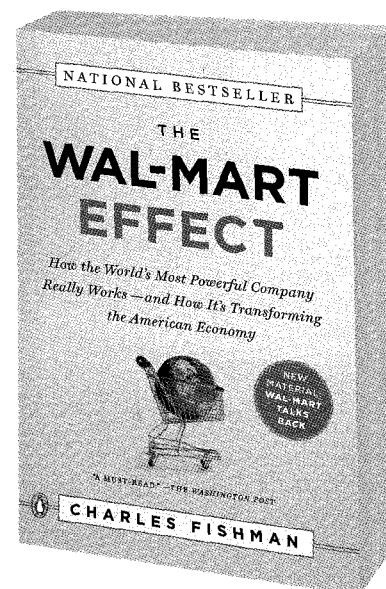
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BOOKS

A guide to additional releases

COVER to COVER

CURRENT AFFAIRS



Power, Faith, and Fantasy

by Michael B. Oren (Norton)

In this survey of U.S.–Middle Eastern engagement, a leading Israeli historian argues that our relationship with the Middle East has always been inseparable from our sense of ourselves. "On balance," he concludes, "Americans historically brought far more beneficence than avarice to the Middle East and caused significantly less harm than good."

HISTORY



Dancing in the Streets

by Barbara Ehrenreich (Metropolitan)

The author of *Nickel and Dimed* probes the curious history of "collective joy," portraying the advance of Western civilization as a determined campaign to purge ecstasy and fellow feeling from daily life. Although Ehrenreich's scope is vast, and the more visceral type of communitarianism she calls for is appealing, her book lacks the passionate urgency of its ostensible subject and remains somewhat inert.

The Averaged American

by Sarah E. Igo (Harvard)

In what could be a companion volume of sorts to Ehrenreich's book, a scholar meditates on the rise of public-opinion polling in the U.S. and the peculiar brand of self-knowledge-at-a-distance for which we have Gallup and Kinsey to thank. Igo notes that although such surveys have become more scientific, they remain inescapably reductive, so that Americans have learned "what their metaphorical, but not their actual, neighbors were thinking and doing."

Where We Lived

by Jack Larkin (Taunton)

A fascinating and beautifully photographed survey of American homes built between 1775 and 1840 reveals an

astounding variety of dwellings as well as certain common bonds: cramped spaces, persistent smells, no privacy to speak of.

BIOGRAPHY



Ronald Reagan

by John Patrick Diggins (Norton)

The author, a prominent conservative historian, concedes that Reagan was a relativistic enabler of Big Government and had little use for organized religion, but nevertheless regards him as a truer conservative than many who claim the mantle today. Diggins's ability to glimpse Reagan's contradictions clearly (and explain why those contradictions made Reagan, in a way, all the more himself) leaves his subject at once more legible and more mysterious.

Freud: Inventor of the Modern Mind

by Peter D. Kramer (HarperCollins)

A brief, compelling reassessment of Freud by the author of *Listening to Prozac*. Although the great analyst was "more devious and less original than he made himself out to be," Kramer generously concludes that "the gradual revelation of a less straightforward, less competent, less lovable Freud contains an affirmation of Freudian precepts"—particularly that "what is hidden in people may not be admirable."

Leonard Woolf

by Victoria Glendinning (Free Press)

The husband of Virginia Woolf provided so much information in his brilliant autobiography that perhaps there has seemed no need till now for a full, well-researched biography. But Glendinning—one of Britain's most celebrated biographers—presents us with a perceptive, understated account, especially for the years after Virginia's death. She describes, in ways Woolf himself could not, the trials of a semi-outsider in the Bloomsbury world—a Jew; a poor

man; a practical, persistent intelligence amid genius. Civil servant in the Empire (with the conscience and prescience of Orwell), novelist, distinguished publisher, historian, political analyst and adviser, journalist, and editor, Leonard Woolf famously summed up his career as so many hours of "perfectly useless work." Glendinning doesn't buy it, and offers a more apt and cheerful assessment.

Thomas Hardy

by Claire Tomalin (Penguin)

Tomalin's book appears only a few months after the revised edition of Michael Millgate's magisterial biography of Thomas Hardy, and the author acknowledges her debt to Millgate. But readers of her earlier biographies, especially *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* (2002), will know that Tomalin has something special to offer. In a style both scholarly and entertaining—often in short, fast-paced sentences—Tomalin examines the emotional paradoxes of her notoriously opaque subject. She turns fresh attention to Hardy's first marriage: the book opens with Emma's death—the moment, Tomalin writes, "when Thomas Hardy became a great poet." Sympathetic and often wry, Tomalin is most innovative when exploring the biographical ironies of Hardy's poems.

George Gershwin

by Howard Pollack (California)

At nearly 900 pages, Pollack's study intends to be definitive—as did its shorter predecessor, William Hyland's *George Gershwin* (2003). Pollack devotes fewer than 200 pages to straight biography, but in the rest he discerningly surveys Gershwin's compositions (including recently discovered ones) in historical and musical detail. The book, in fact, is a remarkable compendium of detail. This alone will probably make it definitive, though Hyland writes more subtly about Gershwin's personality. Still,

PETER HOEY

one is grateful for Pollack's wealth of anecdotes, like Kitty Carlisle's dismissal of Gershwin's love letters as "hardly of a tone to inspire serious feelings."

SOCIETY and CULTURE



Four Days to Glory

by Mark Kreidler (HarperCollins)

In a sort of *Friday Night Mats* for the Iowa high-school wrestling circuit, an ESPN contributor follows two of the state's most promising wrestlers through their senior seasons. Although Kreidler's book lacks the strong sense of place of H. G. Bissinger's Texas football classic, it's an inspiring chronicle of individual effort—and its portraits of stifling gyms and miserly training diets ably evoke an elemental loneliness unique to the sport.

Wallowing in Sex

by Elana Levine (Duke)

A media-studies scholar documents how the sexual revolution made its way into the mainstream via 1970s American television. Leaving aside Levine's unintentionally amusing academic dutifulness—"I have been able to view this episode of the *Match Game*, along with many others, in syndicated repeats on the Game Show Network"—the book does map genuine cultural change and find meaning in an ephemeral medium that, despite its pervasiveness, is too often regarded as unfit for serious study.

The Proper Care and Feeding of Marriage

by Dr. Laura Schlessinger (HarperCollins)

Eschewing, as always, wishy-washy understatement (sex-averse women should "get over yourselves and under your men," for example), Dr. Laura, in this follow-up to *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, traces the cause of much marital unhappiness to our "almost total lack of understanding, appreciation, and respect for what is feminine and what is masculine—and therefore what it means to be the counterpoint to the other."

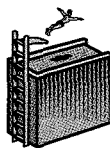
The Real Toy Story

by Eric Clark (Free Press)

A fascinating exposé of the \$20 billion-a-year toy industry, in which ads increasingly tout sex and violence, executives jockey for market share with

alarming bloodthirstiness, and the terrifying prospect of KGOY—"kids getting older younger," and therefore becoming immune to the charms of the toy chest—haunts all.

FICTION



House of Meetings

by Martin Amis (Knopf)

Amis's short eleventh novel works intermittently as a grimly comic assault on the peculiar monstrousness of Russia. The remainder—a ponderously suspenseful drama about two Russian brothers, gulag survivors fixated on the same woman—is, uncharacteristically for this gifted writer, a tinny, hyperbolic, static affair.

Returning to Earth

by Jim Harrison (Grove/Atlantic)

With his roots in the hunting and fishing ethos of the upper Midwest, his straightforward style, his appreciation of the natural world and of life's sensual pleasures, his focus on grand themes, Harrison might almost be a parody of the quintessential American male writer, were he not the real thing. In the first section of this empathetic novel about love, death, and redemption, a man dying of Lou Gehrig's disease gives his wife a digressive account of his family's hard-knocks history. The remaining three sections explore how his death affects those who loved him.

Consolation

by Michael Redhill (Little, Brown)

Lou Gehrig's disease again! In this case, a local historian, suffering from the malady, posits, to public ridicule, that a trove of photographs of early Toronto lies beneath a landfill. Redhill, author of the affecting short-story collection *Fidelity*, shifts between the present-day account of the widow's efforts to vindicate her husband and the story of the photographer in mid-nineteenth-century Toronto. Puzzlingly, the modern bits are stilted, at times almost amateurish, while the historical parts sing.

Sacred Games

by Vikram Chandra (HarperCollins)

This well-written entertainment, with a plot of Victorian complexity and a page count to match, centers on the cat-and-mouse between a Bombay police inspector and a crime boss.

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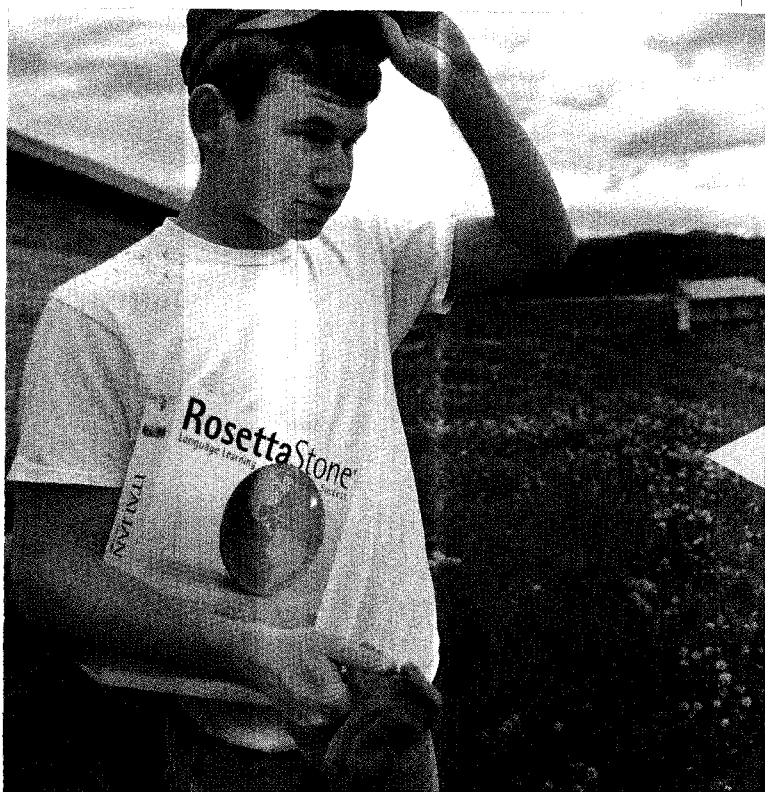


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TRAVELS

A journey through Alsace-Lorraine to the town that gave America its name

Map Quest

BY TOBY LESTER

For that eccentric breed of human being known as the antique-map enthusiast, the town of Saint-Dié-des-Vosges is sacred ground. Situated in the Vosges mountains of Lorraine, in northeast France, the town spreads out along the banks of a swift and muddy little river called the Meurthe. Gentle forest-cloaked hills rim the town, creating a natural basin that practically invites fog to settle in and stay awhile. The setting feels isolated, in a cozy sort of way, but in fact Saint-Dié is only a short drive from three of the most important cities of the Rhine Valley. To the northeast is Strasbourg, France, the capital of the neighboring province of Alsace; to the east is Freiburg, a German university town at the edge of the Black Forest; and to the southeast is Basel, in northern Switzerland.

Saint-Dié's claim to fame is a memorable one: 500 years ago, after reading about the transatlantic explorations of the Florentine merchant Amerigo Vespucci, a small group of scholars in Saint-Dié coined the name *America* and put

it on a giant world map known today as the Waldseemüller map of 1507 (named for the group's chief mapmaker, Martin Waldseemüller). Surviving in the form of a single printed copy, it's a remarkable document, and not just because of the name *America*. Drawn fifteen years after Christopher Columbus first sailed across the Atlantic, the map departed from the prevailing idea, based on Columbus's own beliefs, that the lands being explored were some yet-to-be-determined part of Asia. Instead, it showed the New World as a giant, entirely new landmass surrounded by water—and, tantalizingly, it did so years before any European is known to have laid eyes on the Pacific.

Was this a spectacularly good guess, or did the Saint-Dié scholars have access to information about now-forgotten early explorations of South America? It's impossible to say. All we know is that their sponsor, Duke René II of Lorraine, somehow got his hands on at least one nautical chart of the Atlantic

and passed it along to his mapmakers, who incorporated information not only about the New World but also about the very recent Portuguese ocean voyages around Africa to India. As a result, the Waldseemüller map became the first to depict the contours of the Earth's continents and oceans largely as we know them today. The mapmakers also produced a miniature version—a series of little paper strips designed to be cut out and pasted together onto a ball, in effect creating the first mass-produced globe ever made—and a geographical treatise called the *Cosmographiae introductio*, which explained the choice of the name *America*. Thanks in large part to Saint-Dié's proximity to Strasbourg, a major center of Europe's nascent printing industry, the *Cosmographiae* quickly went through several printings and became a best seller, and reportedly a thousand copies of the wall map itself were also printed. The timing was impeccable: the New World needed a name, and the Saint-Dié scholars, aided

THE TRAVEL ADVISORY

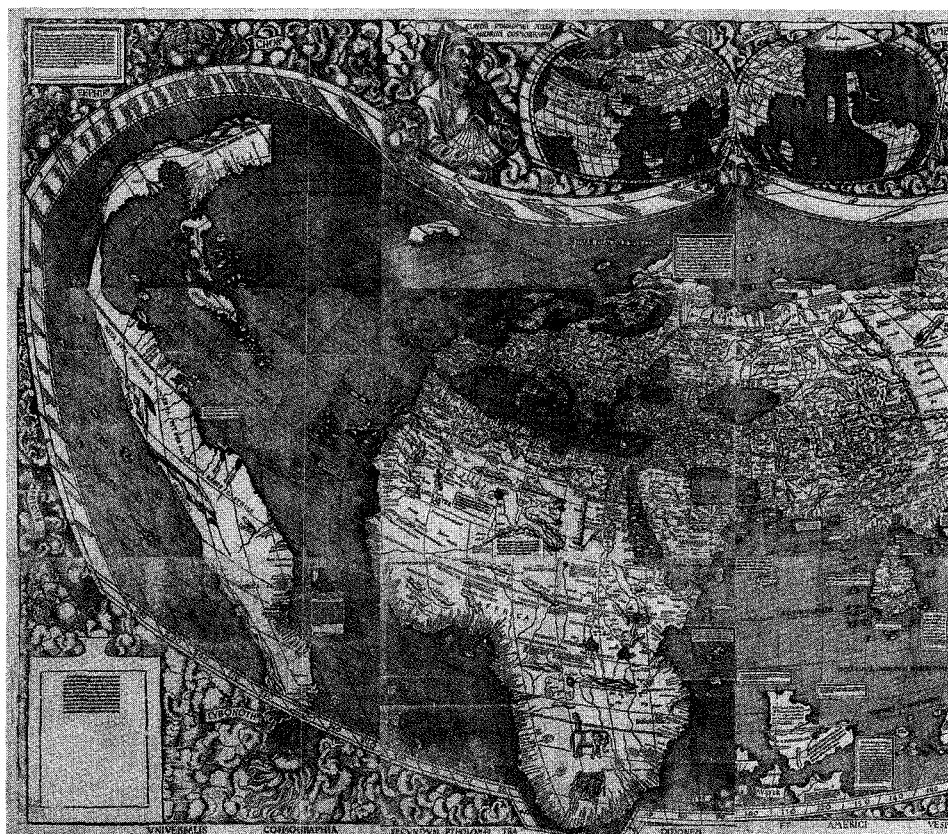
WHAT TO DO IN ALSACE-LORRAINE

Any visit to the area should include a stay in **Strasbourg**, the capital of Alsace. The town's main tourist draw is its cathedral, a red-sandstone masterpiece that for a time was the world's tallest building. Sitting in a café and watching the cathedral take on a pinkish glow in the setting sun is a pleasure not to be missed. Dusk is a terrific time to explore the city's well-preserved historic district too, especially **La Petite France**—a lovely area of canals and timber-framed medieval houses.

Those who like wine should head straight for the well-marked **Route des Vins**. If you're pressed for time, **Ribeauvillé** is a good place to go; it's a pleasant town, in the heart of the wine district, where you can find excellent wines, restaurants, and lodging.

For memorable luxury accommodation throughout the region, check out **Relais & Châteaux** (www.relaischateaux.com); for rental cottages, try the **Maison des Gîtes de France** (www.gites-de-france.fr/eng/index.htm); and for everything in between, call the tourist offices of the places you're interested in visiting. Regional culinary specialties include sausages, cheeses, pâtés, and foie gras; choucroute (sauerkraut); Riesling-based coq au vin; and a number of artery-hardening dishes involving eggs, cheese, cream, and pork—most notably quiche lorraine. A rental car is the easiest option for getting around (I used **Europcar**; www.europcar.com), but a bike is the most fun. Rentals are available in Colmar, the wine region's big city; consult the tourist office (011-33-3-89-20-68-92).

Those interested in the nearby Vosges mountains should explore the **Route des Crêtes**, a fifty-mile stretch of road built along a high ridgeline that offers spectacular views of the Rhine Valley. Hiking is a good option too; the **Club Vosgien** (011-33-3-88-32-57-96; 16 rue Ste-Hélène, 6700 Strasbourg) produces trail maps, maintains a network of huts, and can suggest itineraries.



by the new powers of the printing press, gave it one, to the dismay of those who felt Columbus deserved the honor.

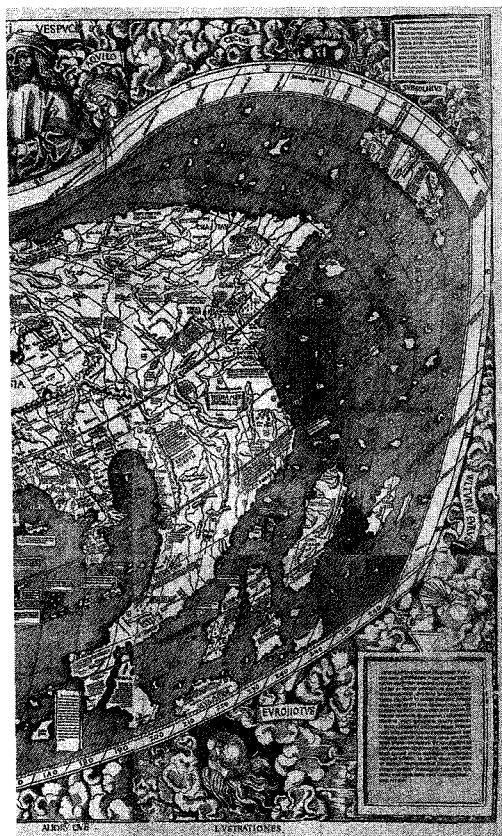
Saint-Dié is very proud of its history, so much so that it has taken to puffing out its chest and referring to itself as “the birthplace of America” and even the “World Capital of Geography.” To support those claims, it hosts an international geography festival each year at the end of September. I had been interested in the map since the Library of Congress acquired the sole extant copy, in 2003, for \$10 million, and when I got word that the 2006 festival was going to launch a year-long celebration of “the 500 years of the baptism of America,” I booked a flight.

When I finally saw a program of events, made available only shortly before I was due to depart, my heart sank. The festival bore the title “Geographers Rediscover the Americas,” and the program featured talks and discussions with such titles as “People and States: The Impossible Equation?” “Urban Dynamics in Guyana,” and “Snow in the Vosgian Massif, Past and Future.” To make the best of things, I decided to explore the area

around Saint-Dié, which I knew to be a wonderful place to visit. As for the festival itself, I consoled myself by planning to attend the session titled “Do Americans Eat So Badly?”

Two weeks later I flew into Strasbourg, rented a car, and drove south into the Alsatian Plain. My destination was the Route des Vins—a 112-mile stretch of narrow country road (three stars in my Michelin Green Guide!) that hugs the low eastern slopes of the Vosges and winds its way scenically through acre after acre of fastidiously tended vineyards.

Wine is a very big deal in Alsace. Vineyards have been planted in the region since at least the third century A.D., and today almost a fifth of all French white wine comes from Alsace, including the Rieslings and Gewürztraminers for which the area is famous. I arrived just as the *vendange* (grape harvest) had begun, and temporary signs posted along the road announced VENDANGEURS! warning drivers to keep an eye out for grape pickers. Heavy rains and unseasonably warm weather were wreaking havoc on the harvest,



THE WALDSEEMÜLLER MAP of 1507

and a rush was on to pick as many grapes as possible before they went bad. The story dominated the local newspapers. One article, titled "Race Against the Clock," led with this ominous development: "Grape harvesting on Sundays!"

I took a short detour to visit Mont St. Odile, a convent and pilgrimage destination high in the foothills of the Vosges ("a splendid panorama," two Michelin stars). After taking in the sights, I tromped down into the surrounding forest, where I picked up a trail following the remains of what's known as the Pagan Wall—a mysterious structure, still ten feet high in places, that may date back to Celtic times. Deeper into the forest I came across a well-maintained Roman footpath. Alsace has had many occupiers.

Local producers at every town and village along the Route des Vins offer you the chance to tour their vineyards, visit their cellars, and taste their wines. I did my tasting in Ribeauvillé, a lovely, quaint medieval town ("picturesque," one star) that—I have to admit—is a lot like all of

the other lovely, quaint medieval towns in Alsace. The Michelin guide does not divulge this secret. At first you can't help but be enchanted—by the medieval towers and churches, by the timber-framed houses and their red tiled roofs, by the bright flower boxes in the windows, by the narrow cobbled streets, by the quietly burbling fountains, by the artful displays of gourmet specialty foods, by the kindly shopkeepers. But these towns are the equivalent of sweet Alsatian dessert wines: delicious in small doses but cloying in greater quantity. By the time I had visited a few others—Riquewihr ("attractive," three stars), Kayserberg ("charming," two stars), and Eguisheim ("hardly changed since the 16C," one star)—I found myself developing an allergic reaction to them. And to my Michelin guide.

It was time to go to Saint-Dié.

I chose a back road and followed it up into the mountains. Somewhere along the way, I passed from Alsace into Lorraine—and not long after, I arrived in Saint-Dié. I made straight for the town museum. It was only a short walk from my hotel, across the river and into the town center. The streets, festooned with blue-and-white banners announcing the FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE GÉOGRAPHIE, were full of wandering packs of festivalgoers: middle-aged French geography teachers, aimless local teens, the occasional African immigrant, and an alarming number of people dressed up as cowboys and Indians.

The museum holds a small but precious collection of Waldseemüller-related artifacts: a copy of the *Cosmographiae introductio*, a few other maps and texts produced by the Saint-Dié scholars, and an assortment of other rare printed materials from the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries. (When I arrived, though, I was disconcerted to discover that for the festival, the museum had decided to pad its historical collection with displays of Amish quilts, American Indian portraits, and toy American soldiers.) The museum is well worth a visit, as is the nearby church, parts of which date back to the twelfth century.

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But to fully appreciate the region's role in Renaissance history, you should also make time for a trip to the wonderful Bibliothèque Humaniste, in the town of Sélestat, just off the Route des Vins, which possesses a rich collection of early manuscripts and printed books, many of them once part of the private library of the famous humanist (and friend of Erasmus) Beatus Rhenanus.

The afternoon took on a surreal quality after I left the museum. I drifted down to a pedestrian area along the banks of the Meurthe, where I caught sight of the Tower of Liberty—a looming white structure that the town's promotional literature describes as "a dream of steel, of cables and canvas, a boat, a bird, a plane." Improbably, two white tepees had been set up on the lawn below the tower, and a sign in front of them invited visitors to take a walk in THE WILD FOREST OF THE AMERICAS—a short path of wood shavings that led past a row of traumatized little saplings native to North and South America. Nearby, a troupe of middle-aged women in cowgirl outfits performed a dance to Frank Sinatra's rendition of "New York, New York."

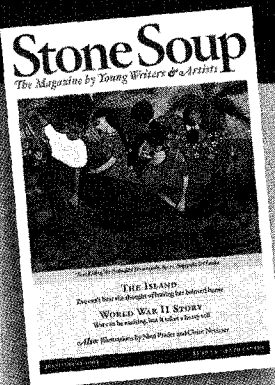
I left the tepees and found a tent set up for cooking demonstrations. When I walked in, a chef in uniform was delicately placing a small flower garnish on a dish he had just prepared. The room was packed, and at first I couldn't tell what he was working on, but soon enough I figured it out. We were watching the preparation of ... hamburgers ("à la Vosgienne"), blueberry doughnuts, and milk shakes flavored with the distilled essence of locally grown buds of fir.

Florally enhanced American food, dancing cowgirls, tepees, the Wild Forest, Amish quilts: it was supremely ridiculous. But if this was how I was going to spend my time at the birthplace of America, then so be it. I didn't need to insert myself ironically into the audience at "Do Americans Eat So Badly?" Instead, I could just have a hamburger and a milk shake right where I was.

They were delicious. ▀

Toby Lester, an Atlantic contributing editor, is at work on a book about the Waldseemüller world map of 1507.

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FOOD

The best way to make rice pudding is always your grandmother's.

Northern Comfort

BY CORBY KUMMER

What kind of rice pudding you like depends, like all childhood food, on your earliest memories. Creamy and foamy, or dense and eggy? Stove-top or baked? White sugar or brown? The bar-est dusting of cinnamon, or just nutmeg? Skin or no skin? Most brutally divisive of all: raisins or no? Few opinions on the subject are neutral, and almost every one can be traced directly to a mother or a grandmother. Hence my annual attempts to duplicate the mythic rice pudding of my youth—not the rice pudding my mother made (of which, naturally, I have fond memories) but the one *her* mother made, which took hours and hours but was the only true rice pudding.

Last winter my search for a master recipe that would work in my kitchen resulted in many lost afternoons ending with half-raw rice floating in sad pools of gray milk or embedded in caramelized rubber. So this year I decided to be more systematic. Before the ground had fully frozen, I turned to those two American bibles, *The Fannie Farmer Cookbook* and *The Joy of Cooking*, and made forays with several fashionable and easily available kinds of rice—more than a dozen forays, in fact, until everyone around me was refusing, like A. A. Milne's contrary Mary Jane, to eat rice pudding again.

Tasters I recruited who like what I think of as diner-style pudding were displeased. Nothing about that sort of pudding seems homemade to me. I was surprised, in fact, that so many people associate what I think of as strictly a luncheonette item with their childhood kitchens. Creamy white tapioca-style pudding is certainly soothing. It's easy for restaurants to make in big batches or buy in big tubs, and it makes a good match with the sprayed whipped cream



that often tops it—the two are practically the same color, and equally characterless. I'm a skin man. And I think the point of rice pudding is intense milkiness, unsullied by the thickeners often slipped into stove-top pudding, and distinct grains of ever-so-slightly chewy rice. If you can't taste the rice, you might as well make some other kind of pudding.

Classic baked pudding is simply raw rice cooked slowly in a low oven in an

open dish so that the milk naturally condenses and gives a warm, butterscotch flavor as the rice absorbs it. There are no eggs, just some sugar and, if you like, vanilla and nutmeg. You can eat it with either a fork or a spoon, like its close relative macaroni and cheese. It's pure and soothing, but has a depth of flavor and kind of austerity that makes diner-style pudding seem as ornate and decadent as the Winter Palace.

THE WAGES OF RICE PUDDING

Rice to Riches, an opulent, ultra-modern New York City café modeled on Italy's innumerable elegant gelaterias, makes just the kind of foamy, creamy rice pudding I don't like but many people prefer. That's all it makes: twenty-one kinds, scooped from bowls behind glass cases just like in a gelateria, and doled out for sampling in tiny plastic spoons. It's very stylish comfort food, and a stylish young crowd has found it. In the nearly four years since Rice to Riches opened, customers have become loyal to a core of fifteen or so of its whimsically named flavors, like Coconut Coma and Sex, Drugs, and Rocky Road.

Loyal enough to keep an expensively appointed café near SoHo in business—or apparently enough. Two years ago Thomas Spota, the district attorney of Long Island's Suffolk County, had the café's owner,

where a concierge allegedly worked as a runner for the ring. Moceo's father's lawyer told the *New York Post* that his client had been a bread deliveryman and lived on his pension. He is believed to own 119 Florida condos, and had pleaded guilty and received probation in a 1996 gambling case.

How had Moceo chosen the name for his café? "It just popped into my head," he told me when we recently spoke (after he demanded to know who I was and why I was calling). The case was a "personal issue that's behind me," he said, adding that he comes to the shop, which has never closed during his legal battles, every day. (At the time of this writing, the trial was pending.) He spoke enthusiastically of the constant flavor development he oversaw (the holiday rotation included Kiss My Anisette Xmas Pudding), and of the success of the overnight-delivery mail-order department, which promises to "supply the sweetness" if "someone you care about is sad or struggling" ("you supply the love").

I ordered Understanding Vanilla, in a "sumo"-sized plastic tub, forty ounces (the minimum order), which cost \$49 with shipping. It arrived in Boston in excellent condition, swaddled in multiple ice packs. I could tell that the ingredients were of very high quality, and included none of the thickeners used in most commercial puddings—the texture, light and creamy even after shipping, was an impressive achievement. But the vanilla was overwhelming, tasting more like cream soda than the slew of expensive Tahitian vanilla beans that Moceo said went into it.

A later tasting at the store, with its numerous video screens and its wide oval plate-glass window and ovoid counters, impressed me with the quality, purity, and inventiveness of the flavors. I'd recommend the purest, Old Fashioned Romance, as a beginning order, perhaps in time for Valentine's Day. Or, in the spirit of how the café found its way into the news, you might try the first of the winter flavors: Don Cappuccino. —C.K.

The standard recipe comes from Fannie Farmer, that Yankee (and thus frequently austere) home economist, and was followed by both my mother's and my stepmother's grandmothers, who farmed in the same small Connecticut town. My stepmother told me that her grandmother would fill a wide, three-inch-deep milk-skimming pan, "as big as her oven would hold," with fresh milk, sugar, rice, and seeded raisins, and then leave it for hours; the family would eat it up by the next day.

Like all very simple recipes, this one can take forever to get right. The pan, preferably glass, should allow sufficient evaporation. The kind and amount of sugar matter. White sugar, though the most traditional, can be both bland and cloying (the sugar already in the milk will concentrate as the milk condenses). Too much sugar slows the absorption of the milk; if you add raisins, you need to reduce the amount. And, of course, the rice is key.

For several generations, supermarket rice was long-grain, the kind that is prized in Iran and India and was the first rice grown in this country, in the Carolina Low Country. Long-grain rices like Carolina, Uncle Ben's, and basmati, generically called *indica*, are prized for their ability to remain distinct and fluffy—traits that aren't considered optimal for pudding, which won't thicken without the starch released by the rice. Hence most recipes call for short- or medium-grain "pudding" rice, generically called *japonica*, which gives up its starch much more easily and sticks together, as in sushi and risotto. The sushi rice I tried in several puddings softened reliably, but into a mush I didn't like (though other tasters did).

Somewhat heretically, I prefer long-grain rice, so that I can tell what I'm eating, and because I like the firmness and the taste. For those who don't mind softer rice, the ideal balance is jasmine, a widely available long-grain rice that is half sticky; it is used in Indonesian "compressed rice" and other dishes, all of them detailed in James Oseland's excellent new culinary tour *Cradle of Flavor*.



Peter Moceo, who gave his occupation as "rice-pudding entrepreneur," arrested along with nineteen others, including Moceo's father, for promoting "probably one of the largest gambling operations ever in Suffolk County"—one that handled \$21 million a year. According to *The New York Times*, authorities investigated whether the café was used to launder some of the profits. In pre-Super Bowl raids, police reportedly found nearly \$30,000 in cash at Moceo's café, \$413,000 in the ceiling of his father's house in Brooklyn, and gambling records in his condo at Trump Tower,

Set aside an afternoon or an entire evening to make classic, long-baked pudding, though the preparation itself takes only a few minutes. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees and butter either an 8x8-inch or (for better evaporation and a firmer texture) an 11x7-inch heat-proof glass pan. Stir together 4 cups of milk, 3 tablespoons of long-grain Carolina, Texmati, basmati, or jasmine rice, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and either 1/4 cup of white sugar (preferably cane, for better flavor; easily found brands are Domino and C&H) or 6 tablespoons of lightly packed light or dark brown sugar. White sugar will give a more familiar taste, brown more similar to dulce de leche. For a firmer pudding that will cut into squares, start with 4 tablespoons of rice. If you were raised with raisins, use 1 tablespoon less of sugar for 1/3 to 1/2 cup of dark or golden raisins; if they're dry, first soak them in warm water to cover for ten minutes and then drain and stir them in. Split a vanilla bean lengthwise and add it now (or, if you only have vanilla extract, add it later).

Jasmine and sushi rice, which release more starch, can thicken a pudding made with low-fat or even skim milk, including reduced-lactose, but the pudding will have a somewhat tinny flavor. And after all, much of the charm of "milk puddings," as the English call them, is the milk. (Though rice pudding is common in practically every culture, it plays a part in the English national identity; the newly revised and always delightful *Oxford Companion to Food* defends the puddings with a hurt pride, noting that it is "fashionable in some circles to despise milk puddings.") Whole milk gives the full butterscotch flavor, and in my tests, it set faster.

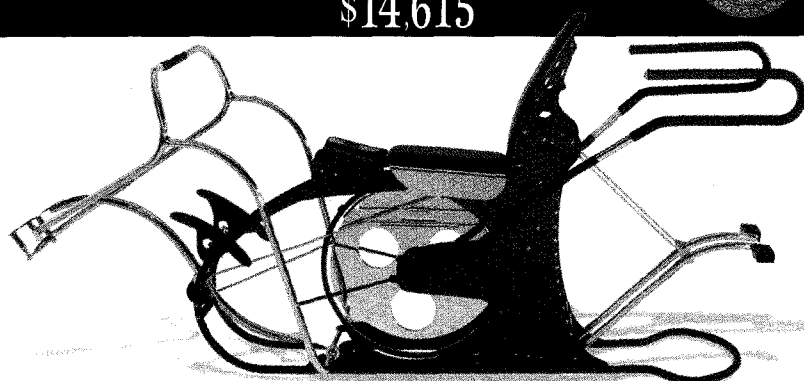
Stir the pudding every half hour for two hours, to keep the rice (and raisins) evenly distributed. If you've used a vanilla bean, remove it before the last stirring—and if you love vanilla, scrape out the softened seeds and stir them back into the pudding. If you're using vanilla extract, add a half or a full teaspoon at the last stirring. This is also the time to add nutmeg, if you like—a quarter to a

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half teaspoon, preferably freshly grated. Cinnamon isn't traditional or even very good (I find it overpowering), and is best saved for a final dusting.

The total cooking time is three to three and a half hours, and if you forget one of the stirrings, it won't matter much. The crust should be golden with a few browned dots (start checking it at two and a half hours). Don't worry if the liquid moves when you tilt the pan, because the pudding will thicken as it stands. It might take several hours, but once the rice has absorbed almost all the warm milk, the pudding will have a creamy texture that could make even a diner owner proud.

and simmer over very low heat for twelve minutes. Don't peek. Turn the burner off and let the rice sit for five to seven minutes. Now, open the pot, and you'll find beautifully steamed rice. (Actually, you'll find very moist rice, better for pudding; to serve on its own, use 1 cup of rice to 1 3/4 cups of water.) Measure out 2 cups and set aside any remaining rice.

Heat the oven to 325 degrees and butter the glass pan. In a bowl, combine 1 1/3 cups of milk, 2 large eggs, 1/4 cup white or 6 tablespoons lightly packed brown sugar, and 1/8 teaspoon of salt, then beat or whisk until blended. Add the rice, stir lightly with a fork, and pour the mixture into the prepared pan. Stir

Last winter I made more than a dozen forays, in fact, until everyone around me was refusing, like A. A. Milne's contrary Mary Jane, to eat rice pudding again.

If impatient mothers didn't make stovetop pudding, they likely used the method spelled out in earlier editions of *The Joy of Cooking*, as my mother did. (She used the 1951 edition, which I consulted. For reference, I always have at hand the 1975, the last original, and the 1997, the completely rewritten, editions; the just-published edition is an odd amalgam of them all.) One reason long-baked pudding might have fallen out of fashion is that nearly everyone in the 1950s and '60s bought parboiled long-grain rice, like Uncle Ben's, which has already gelatinized and won't absorb enough milk to soften if added raw. This pudding starts with cooked rice, and uses eggs to guarantee a firm, quick set. It takes about an hour and a quarter start to finish, and it gives me a chance to repeat the method for perfect rice I once developed after a rice-cooking marathon.

Here it is: Bring 1 1/2 cups of water and 1/4 teaspoon of salt to a boil. Stir in 1/2 cup of long-grain rice. Cover closely

in 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract. Bake for about fifty minutes, until a knife inserted in the center comes out mostly clean. Since the rice will absorb more liquid and harden in the refrigerator after a day or so, the pudding need not be completely firm—but it shouldn't slosh in the center, either. The time in the oven is too short to form a delicious skin; expect a light gold with white sugar, or more nicely dark, if you use brown.

Rice pudding is good warm or cool, and open to every sort of flavor addition, as the Turks, who have entire pudding parlors, and the Indians and the Chinese, among others, know. We in New England like rice pudding with maple syrup, of course, and eat it for breakfast. But freshly whipped cream goes awfully well, too, folded in or served on top. And although leftovers can be warmed in the microwave or on the stove with a bit of milk to soften the rice, the best way to eat rice pudding may well be straight from the refrigerator at midnight. ■

Corby Kummer is an Atlantic senior editor.



CULTURE AND COMMERCE

Today, air travel is just another form of mass transit.
Is there any going back to the glamorous days of yore?

Up, Up, and Away

BY VIRGINIA POSTREL

Last May, bankrupt Delta Air Lines took a break from its usual news of debt restructuring, stock delisting, and abandoned pension obligations to announce something cheery: a new line of uniforms created by Richard Tyler. The designer, whose work is known for its tailored elegance, suggested that his navy-and-red Delta outfits would “evoke the time when air travel was glamorous and sophisticated.”

Ah, the lost world of airline glamour. We seem to hear about it every time an airline introduces new uniforms, updates its airport lounges, or adds first-class amenities. Each new luxury or touch of style supposedly recalls the golden age of flying, before price competition, security checks, and slob in sweatpants ruined everything. Yet despite the wardrobe tweaks and gourmet meals, the magic never returns. “*Airline glamour* is an oxymoron,” says a bicoastal friend.

In fact, bringing the glamour back to air travel is much harder than adding amenities. While luxury may provide an aura of glamour, the two are not the same thing. The glamour of air travel—its aspirational meaning in the public imagination—disappeared before its luxury did, dissipating as flying gradually became commonplace. Today it is mass transit, as much defined by crowds as a rush-hour New York subway ride. In 1956, when *Life* magazine devoted a special issue to the “Air Age,” U.S. airlines carried 46 million passengers. In 2005, they carried nearly 739 million. (Each time you take a flight, you count as a passenger.) On a recent October afternoon, the passengers waiting to board a flight from Los Angeles to London filled every chair in the gate area, with some sitting on the floor. No wonder they wore jeans.

You can still find exclusivity in the sky, of course, as long as you’re willing to pay.

Today’s international airlines sell their upscale cabins as mile-high oases of pampered privacy. Could these cabins offer a re-creation of old-fashioned, ’50s-style glamour? To find out, I booked a flight from Los Angeles to London in Virgin Atlantic’s “Upper Class” cabin, which the airline designed to reflect “an air of natural glamour.” In economy seats, Virgin Atlantic passengers have to fight their neighbors for the armrest. But in Upper Class, which *Forbes* ranks as the best international business class, I enjoyed a private “suite”—a seat and ottoman that fold into a flat bed. The sides block your view of other passengers, creating a cozy sense of personal space. When you’re ready to turn in, you change into a complimentary black jersey “sleep suit,” and the flight attendant makes your bed. These amenities are all part of an international game of premium-class one-upmanship: ever-larger seats, more choices of food

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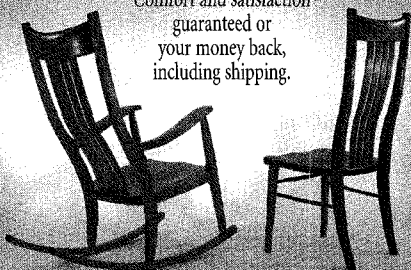
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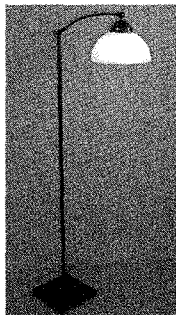
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and entertainment, bigger work spaces with better computer hookups, increased privacy. Singapore Airlines recently announced a first-class flat bed thirty-five inches wide—or, as mischievous news reports noted, big enough for two.

On the way to London, I found plenty of luxury, from attentive meal service to a "hot hands" exfoliation-and-moisturizing treatment. But I didn't find glamour—because airline glamour was never on the planes themselves. It was in the imagination, especially the imagination of people who could only dream of flying. Airline glamour never promised anything as mundane as elbow room, much less a flat bed, a massage, or an arugula salad. It promised a better world. Service and dress reflected the more formal era, but no one expected air travel to be comfortable. It was amazing just to have hot food above the clouds. As a rookie Pan Am stewardess in the mid-1960s, Aimée Bratt was struck by "how crowded it was on an airplane, no place to put anything, lines for the lavatories, no place to sit or stand ... Passengers got their food trays, there was no choice of meals, drinks were served from a hand tray, six at a time, pillows and blankets were overhead, and there were no extra amenities like headsets or hot towels." But, she writes in her memoir *Glamour and Turbulence*, "in those days nobody ever complained." Travel itself was privilege enough. Airline glamour was not about the actual experience of flying but about the *idea* of air travel—and the ideals and identity it represented.

There were two distinct eras of airline glamour, each coincidentally reimagined in its own Leonardo DiCaprio movie. In the prewar era depicted in *The Aviator*, the planes themselves were glamorous, their up-to-the-minute streamlined forms embodying the promise of modernity and implying superhuman speed. Picture DiCaprio as Howard Hughes, stroking the shiny surface of his new aircraft to make sure the rivets are perfectly flush. In the early twentieth century, airplanes represented the future, a world made new. "The airplane is the symbol of the new age. The airplane arouses our energies and our faith," wrote Le

Corbusier. A journalist in the 1930s praised Newark International Airport as the "symbol of a new age"—there's that phrase again—"the age of high speed." (Reality was much bumpier.)

The postwar glamour of the jet age, on the other hand, celebrated the present as much as the future, the passengers and crew more than the planes. Air travel represented youth and adventure. It was an alternative to the nine-to-five regimentation of normal postwar life, a symbol of mid-century desire. Hence DiCaprio's con man in *Catch Me If You Can* seduces his marks while wearing a Pan Am pilot's uniform. A friend advised Jackie Kennedy on White House dinner parties: "Have pretty women, attractive men, guests who are *en passant*, the flavor of another language. This is the jet age, so have something new and changing." *Life* photographers followed a real Pan Am pilot on a seven-day run that included time off for kayaking in the Mediterranean along a Beirut beach and discussing modern art with a painter in a Paris studio. At home with his wife and young daughters, the pilot said, "Sometimes I just stand in the yard watching the briefcase brigade go by."

Today's airlines can't recapture this jet-age glamour, not just because planes are crowded and less-than-luxurious but because society has changed. Home and work, labor and leisure, are not as separate as they once were. And jet-age glamour assumed a world run by an easily identifiable elite. People who flew, especially internationally, seemed like a special circle: the best and the brightest, the international playboys, the tennis pros, the carefree college students with time to see the world. Spy stories, from the James Bond novels to *I Spy*, disguised their heroes as members of this lucky leisure class. On the ground, the briefcase brigade dreamed of being like them.

Jet-age glamour depended on a particular worldview, as well: the innocent internationalism expressed in the opening ceremonies of the Olympics or the Miss Universe pageant, with their colorful costumes and shared aspirations; the sunny faith of *Star Trek* and trick-or-treating for

UNICEF. The jet age's glamorous heroes traveled a world of superficial exoticism and essential sameness. In the 1966 film *The Endless Summer*, two young surfers fly around the world in search of the perfect wave. Everywhere, from Africa to Australia, they find friendly people who love the beach.

Contrary to popular belief, airline glamour didn't disappear with the coming of U.S. airline deregulation, in 1978. The magic had slipped away at least a decade earlier, as a new, negative idea of air travel seized the popular imagination. Terrorist hijackers turned glamour into horror, killing passengers, blowing up planes, and puncturing internationalist ideals. Airports replaced the free-flowing, glass-ringed spaces of their terminals with security checkpoints and fortified blank walls. Arthur Hailey's 1968 novel, *Airport*, and its movie spin-offs, portrayed flying as stressful, sordid, and dangerous. "In the popular imagination," writes architectural historian Alastair Gordon in *Naked Airport*, "air travel was now equated with boredom and disaster." The loss of glamour helped make deregulation possible. If airlines were just another business, why shouldn't they compete in an open marketplace?

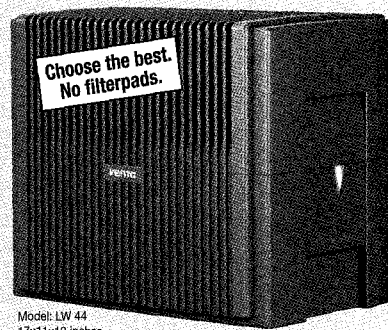
Today air travel is just a more or less enjoyable way to get from place to place, not an emotionally resonant symbol of something greater than itself. We frequent flyers forget how unnatural it is to zoom through the air in a metal tube, and we imagine that airline glamour was all about real silverware and perfectly coiffed stewardesses—the experience on the plane. But glamour is always an illusion, an imaginative picture with the blemishes removed. With experience comes disillusionment, no matter how luxurious the reality may be. The glamour of twentieth-century air travel helped to persuade once-fearful travelers to take to the skies and encouraged parochial Americans to go out and see the world. The crowds on today's planes may have destroyed that glamour. But they also demonstrate its power. ▀

Virginia Postrel is an Atlantic contributing editor and the author of *The Substance of Style* and *The Future and Its Enemies*. Her blog, the Dynamist, can be found at www.dynamist.com/weblog.

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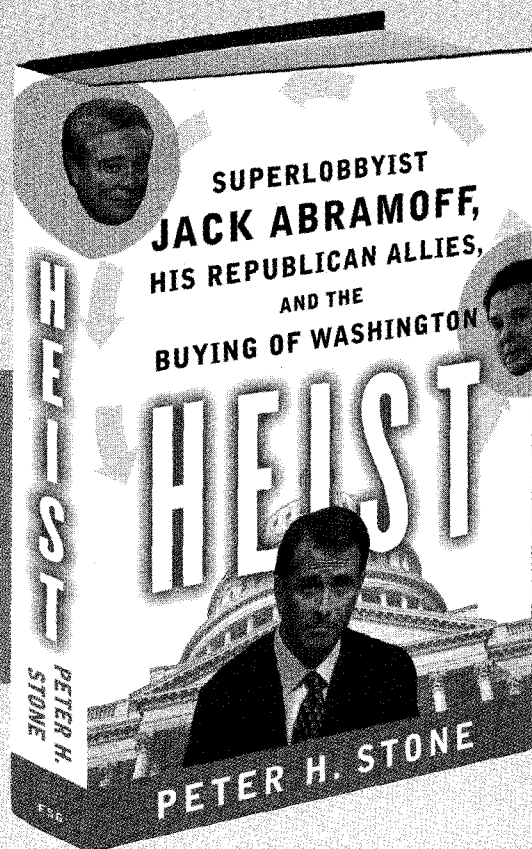
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“We really need mo money . . . We are missing the boat. There are a ton of potential opportunities out there. There are 27 tribes which make over \$100 million a year . . . We need to get moving on them.” —An e-mail from Jack Abramoff to Michael Scanlon, December 2002

“Just let me know who to call, when to call, and what to say. And while you’re at it, get me another client! NOW!” —An e-mail from Ralph Reed to Jack Abramoff in early 2001, offering help in dealing with the Bush administration

“I too am under a horrific assault by a combination of leftists, jealous lobbyists and renegade members of tribes who do not like what we have done with them politically.”
—An e-mail from Jack Abramoff to Christine DeLay, wife of former representative Tom DeLay, just hours before Abramoff was ousted by his law and lobbying firm

Through extensive interviews with current and former members of Congress, Indian tribal leaders who were defrauded of many millions of dollars by Abramoff, and conservative heavyweights like Ralph Reed and Grover Norquist, as well as new e-mails and documents, Stone paints a detailed and revealing portrait of one of the biggest Washington influence-peddling scandals in decades.



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TECHNOLOGY

Social-search programs like Flickr and del.icio.us guide your Web browsing toward places you probably want to go.

Tag Teams

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Millions of people use and rely on “social search” systems. Millions more are hazy about what such systems are and why they might matter. That can change!

Social search is one more way to add subjective, human judgment to the process of finding information on the Internet. You can see why this is useful if you consider the experience of using search systems that lack the human element. Even the best tools for finding data on your own computer’s hard drive (like X1, my favorite for PCs, available free at X1.com or, in a different and to me slightly less useful form, from Yahoo) tend to be all-or-nothing operations. If you remember the exact name or keyword in a given document, and either spell it correctly or misspell it in a way that matches what’s in your files, you’ll find what you’re looking for. Otherwise, you won’t. And if your keyword appears in too many files or e-mails, you’ll have to sort through a flood of results.

In the Internet’s early days, all searches operated on the same mechanistic, keyword-only principle. Searching gained wide popularity only when, starting mainly with Google, it became both fast and relatively smart. In subtly different ways, Google, Yahoo, MSN, Ask, and other leading search engines apply formulas to figure out, from the few words you type into a search box, what you’re really looking for, and return a ranked listing of pages likely to match that request. The subtleties of these formulas constitute the companies’ trade secrets, but in one way or another all attempt to detect and use the signals by which page creators indicate the meaning and importance of what is on a Web page. For instance,



SHOUT

words that a site's designer has set in boldface or used in section titles might get more weight than those in ordinary text, and the other sites linked to a page might indicate whether its references to "China" are more likely to concern crockery or a country.

Social search is a further step in the same direction. The idea is to rely on cues not just from a site's creator but also from the people who have read and reacted to it, and the cues come mainly from something anyone viewing a site can do: "tag" it with a label, a category, a reminder, or

another note that will tell you and other viewers what makes the site interesting.

"Tagging is the very least-effort way to organize things," I was told by Joshua Schachter, who five years ago designed a site now called *del.icio.us*, to keep track of interesting Web sites he had seen. Note that its full address is *del.icio.us*—no *.com* or *.org* suffix. When Web sites ending in *.us* were opened for registration several years ago, Schachter locked down many of them ending in *icio.us*, because he had calculated that a very large number of "real" words ended with those letters. After *del.icio.us* had become by far the most popular site of its kind, Schachter sold it last year to Yahoo, for which he now works.

"The objective in saving things is to be able to get them again, not to get tied up building a structure," he said. "Even people who try very hard to keep all their stuff organized end up with a nice hierarchy

like to save. You click again, and *del.icio.us* stores the site's address along with its tags. (Ma.gnolia and some others store a snapshot of the site's contents, which is useful in case the saved Web address later goes bad.) The next site that catches your eye might have a set of statistics, or a recipe. You save those too, with appropriate tags.

Then from any computer, anywhere, you can log back on to *del.icio.us* (or a similar site). It will show you a list of all the tags you've created. You click on one of them—*Venice, anniversary presents*—and it will bring up a list of all the matching sites. It's as if you were doing a normal Web search, but with categories you defined yourself. This is better than programs that store Web content on your computer, programs like EverNote or Net Snippets, in that you don't need to copy files from laptop to desktop. (It's worse in that you can't get at the information when you're offline.) It's far more flexible than

GIZMO WATCH YOU'RE IT

The big four in social search are Flickr, YouTube, Technorati, and *del.icio.us*. They specialize respectively in pictures, videos, blog entries, and Web sites, and each lets users tag and store material for their own use and also search to find what others have tagged. Their principal advantage is that each of them has more users than its rival sites do. For some online activities, broader participation is not always a plus: the more members of the "Google Earth Community" who apply comments to an aerial photo, for example, the harder it can be to make out either the scenery or the other comments. But the whole idea of social search is that each new assessment of a site's value or content helps other users to find more precisely what they want.

Ma.gnolia does all that *del.icio.us* does, plus stores page contents for viewing if the original link stops working, plus gives users more tools for rating and describing a site. Furl makes it easy to export lists of tagged sites, for research purposes. Wink emphasizes the creation of small communities of shared interests. Tag-Jag is a kind of master search engine for all other search systems. There are hundreds more. On *del.icio.us*, I (as user AtlanticTech) have tagged a list of these and the other sites I've found most valuable, and of the articles and reviews worth paying attention to. You can find it there. —J.F.

"The objective in saving things is to be able to get them again," says Joshua Schachter. "Tagging is the way to organize the stuff you don't have time to organize."

of folders—and a whole lot of uncategorized stuff at the top level. Tagging is the way to organize the stuff you don't have time to organize."

Here's how it works: At *del.icio.us* and similar sites, virtually all of them free, each user creates an account, with user name and password. Most browsers can be configured to log you on automatically whenever you connect to the Internet—and to add a small button or icon to your browser's task bar. Suppose you are thinking about a vacation and come across a blog entry about the best hotels in Venice. You click the button labeled "post to *del.icio.us*" for that site, or for another like it, "Mark in Ma.gnolia" (s.igh), and a screen comes up asking how you'd like to categorize, or tag, the page you've just seen. You type in as many terms or phrases as you think apply to the site—*Italy, vacation, Italian vacation, must-read*—plus any extra reminder or description you'd

storing Web bookmarks in the familiar set of "folders": in a browser, it is tedious to assign a bookmarked URL to more than one folder, but with a social-search program, you can quickly give a bookmarked site as many tags as you want.

Even if tags did nothing more than this, most people who tried using them would find them handy. Schachter says that he created the program for "purely selfish" reasons—he wanted to keep track of his own collection of Web addresses—and some other people I have interviewed about the program say they use it strictly as their own filing system. ("For me it's a dumping ground of Web sites I want to revisit," says Brad DeLong, the economist and prolific blogger from the University of California, Berkeley.) But additional power arises from the social nature of such sites, which lets them draw on judgments made by many people.

Del.icio.us and others like it keep track of the sites and tags you have saved—and those saved by millions of other users. So, apart from retrieving the Italian vacation sites you have already seen and stored, you can quickly see which sites other people have found worth saving under the same or similar tags, plus indications of how popular or informative they are. For instance, when I was trying to find jazz performances in Shanghai, Google's first hit on *Shanghai jazz* was a club by that name in New Jersey, while del.icio.us instantly brought up a blog about acts coming to my new neighborhood in China.

Collective judgments (which in other contexts, especially Internet contexts, are best viewed with some skepticism) can be all the keener when exercised by people who share an interest or expertise. This concept is familiar to anyone who has been on an e-mail list connecting people with some affinity: college classmates, triathletes, experts in Australian wine or Russian politics. I am on several e-lists concerning aviation. If a neighbor tells me that she likes a TV weather show, I nod and do nothing; but when I hear from pilots about a great new weather site, I check it out. "It is within circles of 'friends,' or people with common interests, that tagging becomes most relevant," says Chris Pirillo, who operates a site called TagJag, based in Seattle. "It's not that the whole world is tagging a certain term, but that people whose judgment you trust are. As our tools become smarter and the process of developing communities gets easier, the importance of shared knowledge will only increase."

No site makes creating such communities as easy as it should be. But at Flickr (for sharing and tagging photographs), Technorati (for tagging blogs), Slashdot (for keeping up on technology), and hundreds of others, the process is under way.

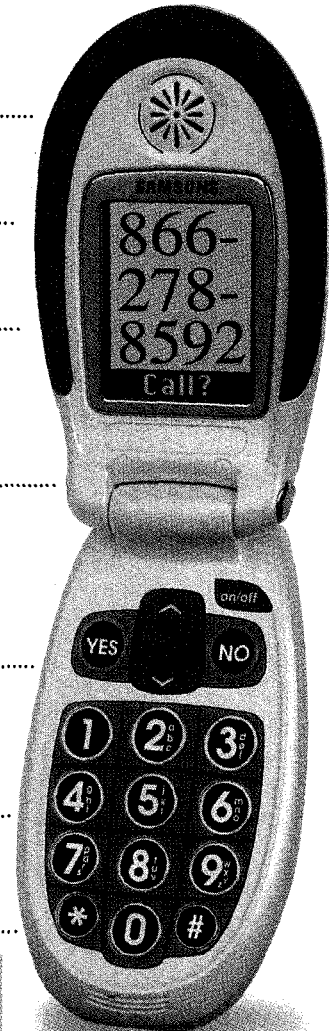
But don't take my word for it. Log on to del.icio.us—or Technorati, or Furl, or Wink—click for tags about "social search" or "folksonomy" (see "You're It," previous page), and see what you find. ▀

James Fallows is an Atlantic national correspondent.

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CONTENT

A new wave of Web innovation is finally challenging Steve Jobs's empire of cool.

The Digital-Music Mosh Pit

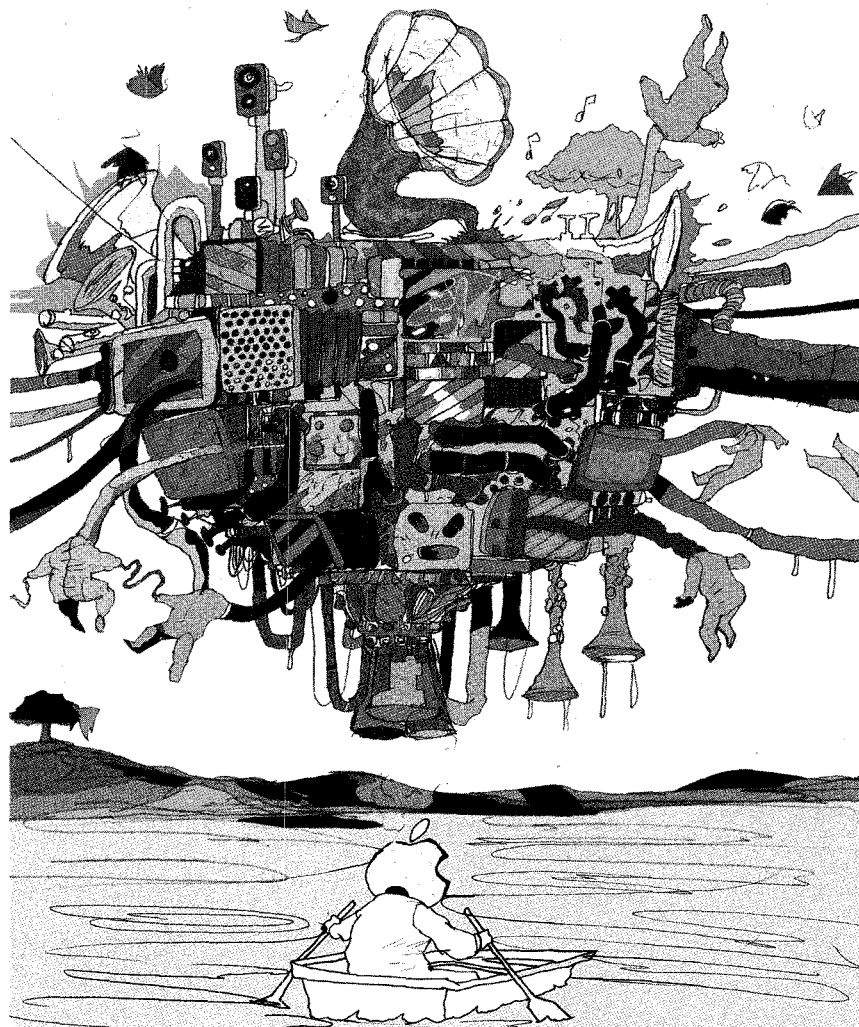
BY MICHAEL HIRSCHORN

I had my music-geek epiphany early last year. Like many music heads, I'd been playing with the two best-known interactive streaming music services: Pandora and Last.fm. With either one, you enter your favorite songs and artists, and the service then streams back music you might like, operating on something of a this-may-look-odd-but-it-tastes-like-chicken principle. Each comes at the issue from a different angle, though.

Pandora is a wonderfully intuitive but only intermittently successful experiment in applying a "genome" metaphor to music: it breaks down hundreds of thousands of songs to their constituent elements—rhythm, melody, tempo, and so forth. It's a cool idea, but the biology-based approach to music listening can turn into a farcical mashup of styles, in which a request for something similar to Grandaddy (a gentle, incontestably credible alt-rock band from Modesto, California) yielded me music that sounded like easy-listening classics from the 1970s. Pandora is, of course, correct that Grandaddy basically is Air Supply in indie drag, but an online seeker wants affirmation, not critique.

Last.fm takes the simpler tack of grouping music by what other listeners like—so if, for example, you key in the Austin, Texas, band Spoon, you'll be told what other Spoon fans on Last.fm are into. And Last.fm, if you let it, will track what music you're listening to and connect you to people who like similar music, a hallmark of "social media" or "Web 2.0" sites.

I'd long felt a profound sense of loss over the demise of the Mancunian band the Stone Roses, whose eponymous 1989 album raised rave-y Britpop to the



level of sacrament. So I keyed in *Stone Roses*, expecting to hear the similar-sounding Charlatans UK or Kasabian, a current Roses-ish group. Instead, I was kicked back Neutral Milk Hotel, an Athens, Georgia-based collective centered around an artist named Jeff Mangum. NMH's 1998 *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea* is a wildly over-the-top cult masterpiece, an operatic song cycle that probes the mystical import of the fate of Anne Frank and other tragedies. Take my word: it sounds only marginally like

anything by the Stone Roses. But both albums are on my mental top-ten-of-all-time list, and I had flattered myself that only I saw the cosmic linkages between the two albums' mystico-religious sound washes, rave-ups, and idiosyncratic lyricism. Having it recommended to me was a goosebump-inducing moment—and a neat demonstration for me of why social media is sweeping the Web: *There are other people out there who feel this as deeply as I do! Maybe we can all get together and achieve a higher unity!*

JEREMY TRAUMA

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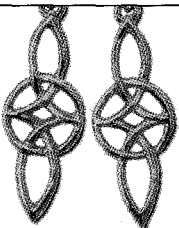
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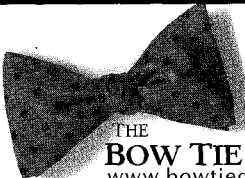
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These are vertiginous, thrilling times for music fans. Where once my only options were CDs and radio, I can now deploy a battery of devices, platforms, and formats to enjoy the music I already own and to find more. Most of us are only now starting to unlock the potential of our iPods, but the pace of change in the digital-music sphere is such that even the pleasures of spinning the wheels on our nanos will soon seem old hat. As I'm writing this, I'm playing a Flash-based MP3 blog extractor called Hype Machine. It's a simple Web-based application that sucks songs mentioned in music blogs into an Internet radio stream. I just heard a new Neil Young track segue into an awesome club banger by a rapper named Milano. Now it's playing an electro-tastic Mode-selektor remix of "Dial Zero" by My Robot Friend. Clicking on "read blog post," I was taken to a blog named "ill-ec-tro-nic" that told me more about the track and others like it—plus where to buy it.

Hype Machine operates in a legal gray zone: it doesn't technically have the rights to play this music, but argues that it is simply pointing interested listeners toward bloggers who post links to MP3s, themselves mostly operating in their own legal gray areas. No matter. From Napster onward, music has become a vast Schumpeterian mosh pit of legally dubious digital disintermediation, quick adjustments of economic models, and new leaps forward (or backward, if you're the hapless music label, watching your intellectual property propagating, royalty-free, throughout the Web). That these leaps are happening in three-month increments, rather than the fifty-year cycles of classic modern economics, is testament to the wonderful insanity of this moment.

Indeed, a friend returning in early November from the Web 2.0 Summit in San Francisco reported that much of the conference buzz revolved around a new digital product called iLike, which turns the closed iTunes system into something very much like Last.fm (apparently without the blessing of Apple). Downloaded as a "sidebar" to my desktop, it automatically tracks the music in my iTunes library and finds fellow iLike members

whose music tastes are compatible with mine. (It works on Windows as well.) Playing with the iLike beta recently, I entered my musical preferences through a handy thumbs-up feature that harvested my opinions on a range of well-known artists. Immediately, up popped the image and musical history of a young woman named "C," whose affection for Regina Spektor, Massive Attack, and Shiina Ringo (no, I don't know who that is either) marked her as being musically compatible with me. I was offered the chance to send her a "private message." The subtext here, as with all of the most effective social-media sites, couldn't have been clearer: sharing your peerless taste in music would not only get you status; it might also get you laid.

The iLike beta launched in late October. One can assume that by Memorial Day, if not by the time you read this, the heretofore social-media-unfriendly Apple will have launched a competing product, bought iLike's parent company, or tried to sue the parent company into bankruptcy.

There is order to the madness. If you accept as an article of faith (and I do) that the existence of digital media means everything will eventually become available everywhere for a price that will approach zero, you can start connecting the dots. I'm currently faced with an arbitrary choice: if I want to walk around with my music in my iPod, I have to interface with the closed iTunes system and purchase songs at 99 cents a pop (or, for non-major-label offerings, go to eMusic.com); if I want to enjoy new music, learn about music from people who've built cool user pages, and generally share in the communal joys of critical discrimination, I have to leave iTunes and sniff about online. It is surely only a matter of time before that problem is solved. Indeed, a new peer-to-peer file-sharing service named SpiralFrog (backed by EMI and the Universal Music Group) is planning to offer free, advertising-supported download services. It will be portable but will not work with your iPod. (Kazaa, which recently promised to stop allowing illegal music and video downloads, is apparently also exploring a similar

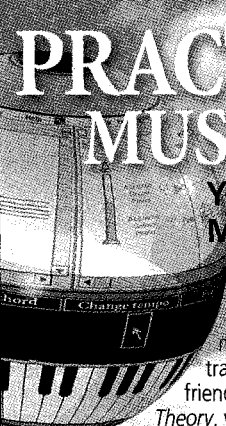
ad-supported service.) It's unclear if this free music will work on the newly launched Microsoft Zune, which is trying to end-run the iPod by offering wireless capability. It allows users to share music files on the go with other Zune users who are within wireless range. This is less sexy than it sounds, since the music you share disappears after three days, and Zune's other features, including its online digital-music store, offer no real advance over iTunes. Sales have been slow.

If past is prologue, SpiralFrog and Kazaa, too, will come up short. But all these failures are in the service of a dynamic evolution. Someone—and that someone is likely already at work on the key advance—will figure this out. One next step could be a move by the labels to make more pay-per-download music available without restriction, meaning that once you've purchased a song, you can do anything you want with it, currently a no-go on Zune or iTunes. Unrestricted MP3 sites could play VHS to iTunes's Betamax. However it occurs, though, the execution of a widely used free and free-flowing music download and sharing system is surely imminent.

Is it possible to conceive of a moment when the iTunes/iPod system is no longer dominant? Like console games and cable and satellite TV, iTunes/iPod has been a stunningly successful execution of a closed, or "end-to-end," system. The iPod is, obviously, a triumph of design, and it exploded onto the music scene because it offered reasonably flawless, intuitive execution (and, to the intellectual-property owners, flawless digital-rights management) at a time when illegal file sharing could not only crash your computer but destroy your hard drive. Yet it is also a triumph of ideology. Steve Jobs has successfully positioned Apple as "getting it," damning the insufficiently Hipsterville Windows masses to lives of monochrome drudgery—the Mac-versus-PC TV ads being only the most blatant expression of Apple's bid for a social conformity of ironic T-shirts, studiously asymmetrical coifs, and an iPod nano in the outside pocket of your Manhattan Portage messenger bag. Never mind

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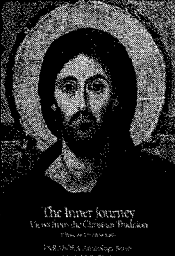
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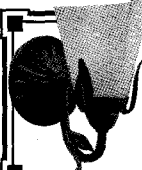


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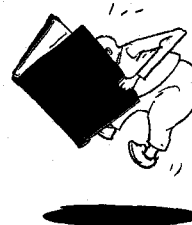
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that your \$399 iPod video will not let you transfer music back onto your (or any other) desktop.

Apple also remains the beneficiary of a network effect that makes iPod's nearly 80 percent market share self-propagating. Once you've sprung for the nano, bought the \$3,000 computer to sync it to, downloaded \$500 worth of music, purchased a Coach carrying case and a cool iPod camera attachment, bought the thingamajig that allows you to stream your iPod through your car radio, and watched your iPod video on an airline that offers it compatibility, you can barely conceive of decamping to an entirely different system with strange keystrokes and a whole new set of technical glitches.

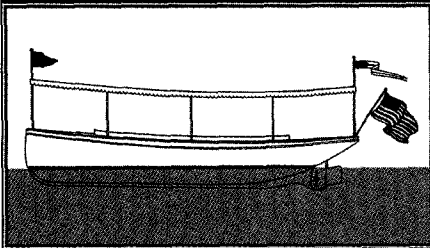
Still, services like iLike and Hype Machine offer the first compelling conceptual challenge to Apple's closed-end system, threatening to upend its virtual Williamsburg of cool. We are at a moment when the digital-music experience is moving from a linear to a dynamic model: the many telling the many what they like, hate, and want others to hear, and providing a communal experience that re-creates digitally some of the reasons we fell in love with music in the first place. This places Steve Jobs in the awkward position of selling the passing pleasures of dissociated loners moving about in their iPod bubbles when a musical carnival is breaking out all around him. (All eyes will, per usual, be on Jobs this month at the Macworld Expo, when he performs his annual product unveiling—rumors are of an integrated cell phone/iPod.)

As for me, I already find that I'm not missing my iPod, which recently broke, on cue, after only a few months. An office mate hooked me up with an iRiver Clix, an ingenious little two-gigabyte MP3 player that's as functional as my old iPod—and actually gets stares on the subway. It syncs nicely (if laboriously) with my computer's Windows Media Player, and suddenly I'm shuffling in and out of thousands of songs on the fly—including that Modeselektor remix of My Robot Friend. ▀

Michael Hirschorn is the executive vice president of original programming and production at VH1.

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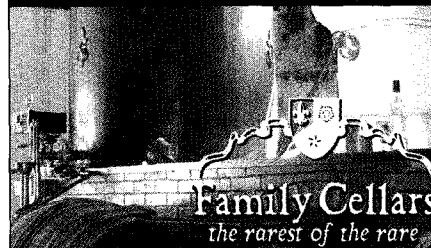
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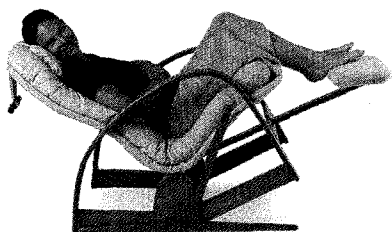
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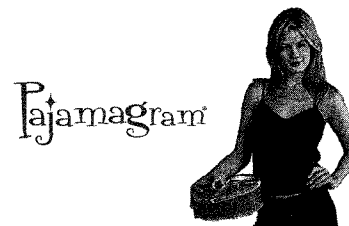
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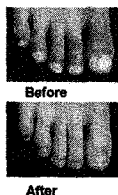


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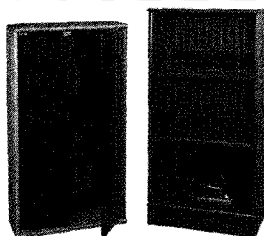
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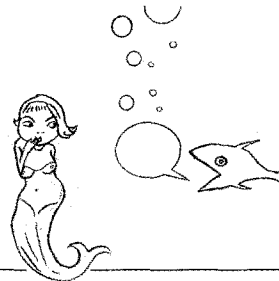
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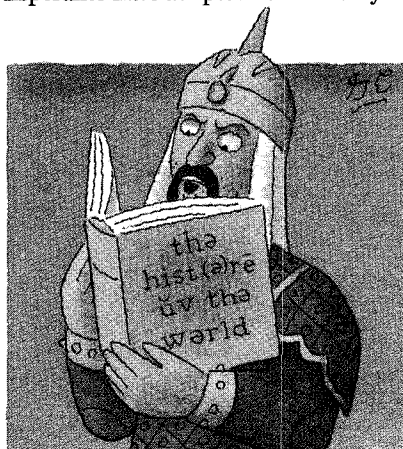
JANET TESTERMAN, of Naples, Fla., writes: "I am teaching a high-school world-history class for the first time this year, and I'm baffled. At the bottom of every page of the 1,000-page textbook, there are pronunciation guides for words on that page. The *Sui* dynasty is pronounced 'Sway.' *Ogodei*, an important descendent of Genghis Khan, is pronounced 'Ergoday.' Why don't they print translations of foreign words phonetically in the first place?"

I've had the same thought. But what is a "foreign" word, and what's a "phonetic" spelling? How to treat foreign words in general is a big subject, so maybe we should stick to discussing ones like your two examples: proper names. No matter how we define "foreign" names, the category ought to include *Sui* and *Ogodei*, which come from languages that don't even use our alphabet: Chinese in the case of *Sui*, Mongolian for *Ogodei*.

Consider *Sui*. Chinese is written in a way that only hints at pronunciation, so to represent it in our alphabet, we've had to start with the language as it's spoken—by somebody, though naturally there are dialects. Different systems of romanization have been tried. Early efforts were so unsystematic that today's experts have a hard time explaining, for instance, why the names *Peking* and *Canton* were given to those cities. Then the Wade-Giles system was imposed, and it remained standard for most of the twentieth century, though its rules were often broken or bent. (Hardly anyone ever bothered with the strict Wade-Giles renderings of those city names, *Pei-ching* and *Kuang-chou*.) In the past few decades, scholars have been switching over to the Pinyin system, which gives us *Beijing* and *Guangzhou*. The spelling of *Sui* remained unchanged

from Wade-Giles to Pinyin—even though everyone agrees that nonexperts could intuit the Chinese pronunciation more easily if the name were written the way you wrote it. But since the expert consensus is in favor of *Sui*, who are we to lobby for *Sway*?

How to phoneticize words from languages that are written with the Roman alphabet is murky for different reasons. In the 2,500 years or so that the Roman alphabet has been around, languages as varied as Swahili, Czech, Vietnamese, and Esperanto have adopted it. Then they've



adapted it to their purposes and reached their own conclusions about what sounds the letters should represent.

Time was, we English speakers blithely respelled non-English speakers' names when we felt like it. Certain Austro-Hungarians who signed their names *Habsburg*, for instance, have long been known to us as *Hapsburgs*. These days, though, such ethnocentricity is rightly considered disrespectful. And anyway, English itself is notoriously unphonetic, even unto people's names. (A spectacular example would be the nineteenth-century British journalist Walter Bagehot, whose name is pronounced "Baj-it.")

If we want to tidy up the whole world of names as they appear in English-language texts, we probably ought to start by getting our own house in order.

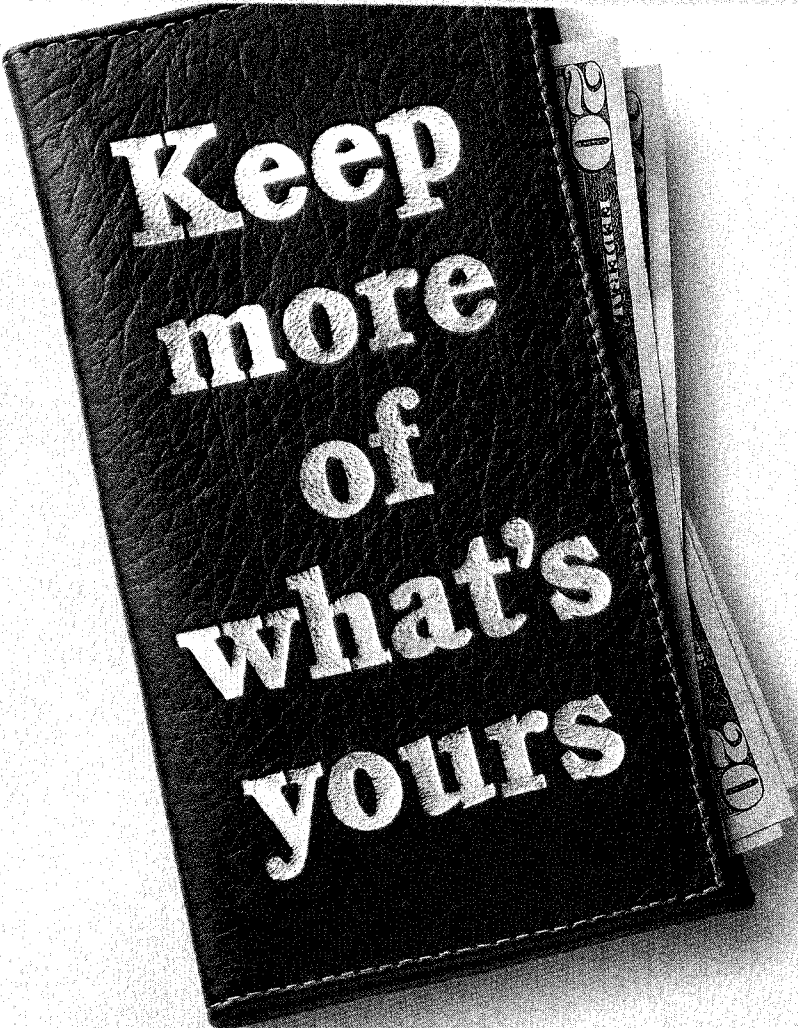
RICHIE BABB, of Chesapeake, Va., writes: "Am I the only person who is driven to distraction by the unnecessary use of *y* at the end of words that end in *-ence*? 'There is a danger of *dependency* (instead of *dependence*) on sleeping pills.' 'There is a growing *insurgency* (instead of *insurgence*) in Iraq.' Am I missing something?"

Remind me, please: Did Ralph Waldo Emerson say a foolish *consistency* is the hobgoblin of little minds, or a foolish *consistence*? Foolish or not, looking for consistency in such suffixes is bound to drive anyone to distraction, because it doesn't exist. I'll admit that the word *dependence* is older than *dependency*, but both words were in use before the first permanent American settlement was established at Jamestown, in 1607. *Dependent* preceded them both. Similarly, *insurgent* was an English word before either *insurgence* or *insurgency*—but *insurgency* seems to be a few decades older than *insurgence*.

We have *credence* but *clemency*, *turbulence* but *tendency*—and *emergence* and *emergency*, which have become fully differentiated words. *Dependency* remains less common than *dependence*—at least, judging by how often the words appear in U.S. news sources. But *insurgency* is much more common than *insurgence* and is to be preferred. ▀

Do you have a language dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, P.O. Box 67375, Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, or send e-mail to mgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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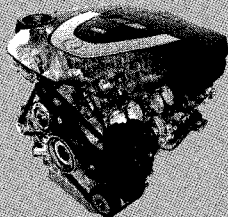


fig. A

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